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CRICHTON.

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BY W.^{illiam} HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF " ROOKWOOD."

Ergo, flos juvenum, Scotiæ spes, Palladis ingens,
Ereptumque decus Musarum e dulcibus ulnis,
Te, quamvis sileant alii, Crichtone, poetæ,
Teque, tuamque necem nunquam mea Musa silebit.

ABERNETHY. *Musa Campestris.*

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CRICHTON.

The First Night.—CONTINUED.



THE FIRST NIGHT,

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XIV.

THE JESTER.

Le Marchant. Vous estes, ce croy-je le joyeulx du Roy ?

Panurge. Voire.

Le March. Fourchez là.

RABELAIS. *Pantagruel.* Liv. IV. Ch. VI.

FORTUNATELY, prior to the occurrence detailed in the last chapter, the spirits of the revellers had been raised to such an enthusiastic height by the potent juices they had swallowed, that the event, which, had it chanced earlier in the evening, might have occasioned much alarm, was now viewed with comparative indifference, and its recollection drowned in fresh bowls of Cyprus, sub-

mitted, however, in the first instance, to the ordeal of Samson, who, it may be remarked, expressed no reluctance to the office imposed upon him by his royal master.

The effect of the occurrence upon the Dames was visible in their altered complexion and demeanour, and it required all the gallantry and attention of the Cavaliers, in any degree, to restore their gaiety. Conversation soon became more free and discursive. Each galliard boasted, in his turn, of his prowess in arms—of his dexterity in horsemanship—of his unerring aim with the pistol—of his fatal stroke with the poignard—of his ability with the sword—in short, of his perfect acquaintance with the whole “theoric and practic” of the duel—a subject which necessarily involved the discussion of Crichton’s approaching combat. The discourse began to take a very animated turn, many speculations being hazarded as to the rank and name of the challenger, a subject upon which the dames appeared singularly curious, and even Esclairmonde manifested anxiety; when, as if brought

thither to gratify their wishes, the subject of their converse—the sable Mask—suddenly presented himself at the entrance of the chamber.

We have stated, that at this door-way ushers were placed to prevent the access of all those who were not included in Henri's list of guests. The Mask, it would seem, was not amongst the number of those expected at the royal table, as the wands of the officers were crossed against the railing, and admission peremptorily refused him.

“Inform his Majesty that *the Mask* entreats an interview with him,” said the figure, impatiently, and appearing half inclined to force his way without further ceremony.

“Monseigneur's description,” returned the Usher, courteously, “is scarcely particular enough on a night when the Louvre numbers a thousand guests who might be similarly designated. Suffer me to add some title less capable of misconstruction.”

“That which I have given thee will suffice,” interrupted the Unknown. “I have reasons

for withholding my name, of which his Majesty will recognize the force."

"Monseigneur is not, perhaps, aware," persisted the Usher, with a profound inclination, "that upon admission to the royal banqueting-room it is customary to remove the vizard. If, therefore, Monseigneur's features are known, concealment will be impossible."

"In this instance his Majesty will dispense with that form," returned the Mask, haughtily. "Do my bidding, Maître, without further parley."

"I will essay, certainly," replied the polite but tedious official, shaking his head—"since Monseigneur so much desires it, but I own I have little anticipation of success."

Contrary, however, to the Usher's prognostications, Henri commanded instant admittance to be given to the Mask, and the Unknown was, in consequence, reverentially conducted by the surprised official to the seat which Marguerite de Valois had abandoned, thus bringing him into immediate contact with his adversary Crichton. Their situation

appeared to be disagreeable to each party ; but it was now too late to remedy the mistake. Henri laughed it off in the best way he could.

“ Nothing can be further from my intention than to interrupt the harmony of your Majesty’s table,” said the Mask, in reply to the King’s apology, “ by any overt act of courtesy to your guests — neither do I esteem it an affront that chance hath placed me for an instant next to one whom I trusted only to encounter again at the sword’s point. My quarrel will well sustain itself until the morrow. But I crave your pardon for trespassing on your patience.—I came not hither to join your revels.—My errand hath no relation to festivity.”

“ ’Fore Heaven, then, my cousin !” replied Henri, regarding the Mask with some astonishment, “ if not to festivity, unto what hath it relation—to what are we indebted for your presence ?”

The Mask looked with some anxiety towards Crichton.

The Scot instantly rose.

"I am in the way, Sire," said he. "Your counsels will be more securely carried on if I quit the banquet."

"No, by our Lady!" cried Henri, rising, and with great courtesy motioning to Crichton to resume his seat—"this shall never be. If any one must suffer inconvenience at our revels, it shall be ourself. You have received sufficient annoyance already, Chevalier Crichton. Sir Mask, we are at your service—though we must need say you have chosen a strange season for an audience."

Saying which, Henri reluctantly led the way towards an embrasure—"Chicot," said he, in an under tone as he passed, "do thou assume our seat for the nonce—we must not attend to the interests of others to the entire exclusion of our own—that were scarce king-like—and hark ye, gossip, as you value your ears, suffer not a syllable to pass between Crichton and our mignonne — you understand."

Chicot instantly, with a mock dignity infinitely diverting to the guests, installed

himself in Henri's vacant chair. His first proceeding was to place his marotte between the lovers, which he laughingly termed "his ambassador's sword, whereby they were to understand they could only speak by proxy." His next was to call upon the poet Ronsard for a song. The bard would willingly have declined the Jester's invitation, but the voices of the revellers were against him, and he was necessitated to promise compliance.

"Fool," muttered Crichton, sternly, who had already taken advantage of the King's absence to hazard a whisper to Esclairmonde — "wilt thou mar this opportunity afforded us by chance of devising means for her escape? Why should she not fly now? I alone will withstand every attempt at pursuit."

"And who would then be the fool?" replied Chicot. "No—no, my addle head hath hatched a scheme worth two of yours. Set yourself at ease. Procure his sarbacane from the Vicomte de Joyeuse on any plea you like; and meanwhile suffer Monsieur de Ronsard to proceed with his roundelay.

See you not that it diverts the attention of the guests, and leaves *us* at liberty.—Fool, quotha! — recant that appellation, compère,”

“ I cry thee mercy,” gossip, rejoined Crichton—“ thou art indeed a very miracle of wit. Joyeuse,” added he, addressing the Vicomte, “ I prithee, favour me with thy sarbacane.”

“ To dispatch a billet to some distant fair one in the outer banquet-hall: ah!—galliard —here 'tis:” saying which, Joyeuse sent his page with the long and costly tube of chased silver resting by his side, to the Scot.

Ronsard, meanwhile, commenced his song, which, if it should not be found to equal in merit the accredited lyrics of the bard, “ *qui, en francois, parla grec et latin,*” its failure must be attributed to the supper he had eaten, and the Cyprus he had swallowed, (both, according to his former patron, Charles IX., unfavourable to the Muse), and in some degree to the quaintness of the measure he selected. Thus, however, ran his strain:—

The Legend of Valdez.

I.

'Tis night!—forth Valdez, in disguise,
 Hies;
 And his visage, as he glides,
 Hides.
 Goes he to yon church to pray?
 Eh!
 No, that fane a secret path
 Hath,
 Leading to a neighbouring pile's
 Aisles;
 Where Nuns lurk.—by priests cajoled
 Old.
 Thither doth Don Valdez go—
 Oh!
 Thither vestal lips to taste
 Haste.

II.

'Neath yon arch, why doth he stand?
 And
 Haps it that he lingers now
 How?
 Suddenly cowl'd priests appear
 Here.
 Voices chant a dirge-like dim
 Hymn:

Mutes a sable coffin drear
 Rear ;
 Where a monument doth lie
 High.
 Scutcheons proud Death's dark parade
 Aid.
 Valdez sees, with fresh alarms,
 Arms,
 Which his own—(gules cross and star !)—
 Are.

III.

An hour—and yet he hath not gone
 On ;
 Neither can he strength to speak
 Eke.
 Hark ! he cries, in fear and doubt,
 Out,
 “ Whom inter ye in that tomb ?
 Whom ?—”
 “ Valdez !—He'll be, 'ere twelve hours,
 Ours !—
 Wait we for his funeral
 All ! ”

IV.

“ Monk ! thou bring'st, if this be truth,
 Ruth ! ”
 Valdez his own fate with dread
 Read.
 Question none he uttered more ;—
 O'er

'Twas ;—and he doth peacefully
Lie
In the tomb he saw, thus crazed,
Raised.

L'Enbop.

Memento Mori! Life's a stale
Tale.

During the progress of Ronsard's song, the Jester had not remained idle. Amidst a thousand absurd grimaces, intended for the amusement of the company, he had contrived in various ways to intimate what was the nature of his intentions respecting Esclairmonde's deliverance to Crichton, and the latter, struck apparently with the feasibility of his plan, traced a hurried line or two on the paper-covering of a dragée which he took from a pile of confectionary before him, and then applying the sarbacane to his lips, winged with dexterous aim the sugared missive into the lap of the Demoiselle Torigni. This incident, if it attracted any notice at all, passed for a mere piece of gallantry, a supposition which was abundantly confirmed by the con-

duct of the fair Florentine, whose sparkling eyes and throbbing bosom, as she perused the paper, as well as her nod of acquiescence, while she finally crushed it within her hands, sufficiently attested the nature of her feelings. Brantôme who was her neighbour, hemmed significantly. Torigni crimsoned to the temples — nothing more was said upon the matter.

“Bravo!” exclaimed Crichton, who flushed with the anticipated success of his scheme, had now entirely recovered his tranquillity, and joined enthusiastically in the applauses bestowed upon Ronsard’s performance — though we suspect from the warmth of his praises, that not a word of the song had reached his ears. “Bravo!” cried he, with well-feigned rapture — “the strains to which we have listened are worthy of him who has won for himself the proud title of the “*Poète François, par Excellence,*” of him who will enjoy a kindred immortality with the Teian and Mæonian bards; of him whom beauty has worshipped, and sages honoured; and to whom one fairer than the fairest nymph of

antiquity — the loveliest pearl of Scotia's
diadem hath inscribed her priceless gift

A RONSARD l'Appollon de la source des Muses.

Happy bard ! upon whom such a Queen hath
smiled. Not Alain Chartier, upon whose
melodious lips, when closed in sleep, Mar-
garet of Scotland impressed a burning kiss ;
not Marot, the aspiring lover of Diane de
Poitiers, and of the royal Marguerite, was so
much to be envied. Happy!—happy bard !
upon whom all lovely things smile.”

“ Except the lovely Torigni,” interrupted
Chicot—“ and she alone, who smiles on all,
frowns upon him. For my part I have the
bad taste to prefer my own verses, or those of
Mellin de Saint Gelais, our ‘ French Ovid,’
or the elegies of my cousin Philippe Desportes
(our ‘ Tibullus,’ if Ronsard is to be our
‘ Anacreon’—bah !), *his* sonnets are worth
all the erotic poesy indited

‘ By Ronsard on those ladies three,
Cassandra, Helen, or Marie.’—”

“ Peace !” said the Scot, “ and to con-

found thee and all such unbelievers I will, if my memory serves me, recite an ode recently written by the bard thou hast traduced, worthy to be classed with the most fervid strains ever poured out by him who sang of old, of love, and of the vine. Attend!" And addressing the poet, whose handsome countenance glowed with satisfaction, and who acknowledged the compliment (for your bards are not insensible to flattery) by kissing his wine-cup, Crichton, with the grace and fervour of an Alcibiades, delivered himself of the following ode—the spirit of which, we fear, may have wholly evaporated in translation.

Amareantic.*

I.

WHEN Bacchus' gift assails my brain,
Care flies, and all her gloomy train ;
My pulses throb, my youth returns,
With its old fire my bosom burns ;
Before my kindling vision rise
A thousand glorious phantasies !

* Paraphrased from Ronsard's Ode.—*Lorsque Bucchus entre chez moi, &c.*

Sudden my empty coffers swell,
With riches inconsusable ;
And mightier treasures 'round me spring
Than Croesus owned, or Phrygia's king.

II.

Nought seek I in that frenzied hour.
Save love's intoxicating power ;
An arm to guide me in the dance,
An eye to thrill me with its glance,
A lip impassioned words to breathe,
A hand my temples to enwreathe,—
Rank, honour, wealth, and worldly weal,
Scornful, I crush beneath my heel.

III.

Then fill the chalice till it shine
Bright as a gem incarnadine !
Fill !—till its fumes have freed me wholly
From the black phantom—Melancholy !
Better inebriate 'tis to lie,
And dying live, than living die !

“Trinquons, mon cher,” cried Ronsard,
holding out his goblet as Criehton concluded,
“my verses acquire a grace from you, such
as they never possessed before.”

“Forget not the rhymes of the good Pan-
tagruel,” said Chicot—

“Et veu qu'il est de cerveau phanaticque,
 Ce me seroita cte de trop picquer,
 Penser mocquer ung si noble trincqueur.”

At this moment the Vicomte de Joyeuse slightly coughed, and directing a glance of intelligence at Crichton, volunteered and executed with much vivacity and spirit, the following—

Dirge of Bourbon.*

I.

WHEN the good Count of Nassau
 Saw Bourbon lie dead,
 “By Saint Barbe and Saint Nicholas !
 Forward ! ” he said.

II.

“ Mutter never prayer o'er him,
 For litter ne'er halt ;
 But sound loud the trumpet—
 Sound, sound to assault !

III.

“ Bring engine,—bring ladder,
 Yon old walls to scale ;
 All Rome, by Saint Peter !
 For Bourbon shall wail.”

* See the song of the Spanish Adventurers in Brantôme's *Discours sur le Connestable de Bourbon* of which these lines are a free version.

We will now return to Henri and his masked visitant, requesting the reader to bear in mind that our drama at this moment proceeds with a double action, or, in other words, that the discourse we are about to recount, and the incident we have just described occurred at one and the same time.

“We would willingly serve you in this enlèvement of the Gelosa,” said Henri, continuing a conversation with the Unknown—the earlier part of which we deem it unnecessary to repeat—“willingly—but shall we own to you our weakness?—we have apprehensions—”

“Of Crichton?” asked the Mask, scarcely able to repress his scorn.

“Of our Mother, my cousin—We hold it a rule never to interfere with *her* plans, unless they interfere with our own, and in this instance we see not how our interests can be mixed up with your wishes. Besides, to speak plainly, we have an affair on hand at this moment which may not improbably excite her displeasure; and we are unwilling to

hazard aught that may occasion serious grounds of difference between us. Why not tarry till to-morrow?"

"Because—but I have already stated my reasons for this urgency—it *must* be to-night—"

"You have as little reliance on Ruggieri as we have, mon cousin," laughed the King.

"I am as little accustomed to balk my inclinations, as your Majesty," replied the Mask, impatiently—"The prey is stricken.—Shall I hesitate to seize it?—By Saint Paul, no. I detain you, Sire. Suffer me to quit the presence. Since you decline giving me your authority I will act upon my own responsibility."

"Stay," replied the King, vacillating between the awe in which he stood of Catherine's resentment, and his anxiety to serve the Mask, "your rashness may occasion further turmoil. Take this ring—our signet. The guard stationed round the Hôtel de Soissons refused you admittance, you say—this ring will obtain it for you.—Take it, and take the girl, and Ruggieri too, if you list. So that

you rid our good city of him and his accursed images we care not. If you encounter our Mother, we leave you to make what excuse you may. She may not, it is probable, oppose your inclinations.—Heaven knows—”

“ I have reason to believe her Majesty is within the tower,” replied the Mask, taking the ring.

“ Go, then, and Venus prosper you, mon cousin,” returned Henri: “ you need fear no interruption on the part of Crichton. He is safe with us, and we will give instant orders that the doors of the Louvre be closed till dawn.”

“ In an hour that caution will be needless,” exclaimed the Mask, triumphantly. “ Ere that space be past, my views will be accomplished.”

And with a haughty salutation the Unknown departed.

The King remained an instant to confer with Du Halde. Chicot, who, upon the departure of the Mask, had vacated his seat,

approached them. Our Jester had a strong penchant for eves-dropping.

“ Let the portals of the Louvre be instantly closed,” said Henri—“ not a guest must go forth till dawn—above all the Chevalier Crichton.”

The chief Valet bowed.

“ I have further commands for thee,” continued the King, lowering his tone—“ at my wonted signal thou wilt extinguish the lights.”

A scarcely-perceptible smile played upon Du Halde’s courtier-like countenance.

“ Ha ! runs it so,” said Chicot, drawing nearer to the group.

And here we leave him to return to the lovers.

“ Esclairmonde,” whispered the Scot, as the buffoon quitted the table, “ place your trust unhesitatingly in that man—he is your safeguard—he will deliver you—confide in him—and fear nothing.”

“ I do not fear, Chevalier Crichton,” re-

plied the Demoiselle, in the same low tone.
“ In my extremity I have one friend who will not fail me—the good Florent Chrétien.”

“ You have one who will perish *for* you, or *with* you,” returned Crichton. “ We shall meet again ?”

“ Perhaps,” answered Esclairmonde ; “ and yet I know not—the future is a gulf into which I dare not gaze.—If possible I will quit this palace—this city—on the morrow ; one tie alone can detain me, if I am free from this hateful bondage.”

“ And that is——?”

“ Henri de Valois,” rejoined a voice.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SARBACANE.

Je dis, et je le sgai que le Roy ayant pris une merveilleuse frayeur de ces choses, *dès le tems de la Sarbacane*, devint enfin si peureux qu'il trembloit à la vûë du moindre éclair.

CONFÉSSION DE SANCY.

HENRI, whose quick ear caught the last words of their conversation, had approached the lovers unperceived. The Jester had in vain attempted to warn them by slightly coughing. The King was too rapid in his movements to allow him to proceed, and he was fearful of awakening suspicion by any overt display of his sympathy with their situation. “Chevalier Crichton,” said the Monarch, angrily regarding the Scot, “we would not

have to remind you a *second time* of your plighted word. Take heed how you rouse our choler—we have something of the Medicis in our composition, though it may not often manifest itself."

"And I," returned the Scot, fiercely—

"Le monde est un bouffon, l'homme une comédie,
L'un porte la marotte, et l'autre est la Folie."

chanted Chicot, adding in a whisper to Crichton. "Your intemperate Scotch blood will ruin all—bethink you what you do."

"You talk boldly, Chevalier," said Henri, "and we trust you will demean yourself as stoutly on the morrow with your sword. Your adversary of the Mask threatens to rob you of your laurels, and to put a stain upon the spotless order with which we have invested you. This must not be, Messire.

"The modest precepts of chivalry teach us, Sire," replied Crichton, "that to vaunt is not to vanquish—

'Un Chevalier, n'en doutez pas,
Doit férir haut, et parler bas.'

I shall abide the issue —content to rely upon a sword which hath never yet failed me, and a cause which I avouch to be the right.”

“Enough,” replied Henri, whose petulance was readily dissipated. “We have bidden Du Halde give orders for the proclamation of the jousts at noon upon the morrow, within the lesser gardens of the Louvre, and we bid ye all, fair dames and puissant knights—to grace it with your presence—

“*Servans d'amours, regardez doucement
Aux eschaffaux anges de Paradis :
Lors jousterez fort et joyeusement
Et vous serez honorez et chéris.*”

As Henri sung this refrain of an old ballad of the Tourney by Eustache Deschamps with much taste and some feeling, his features assumed, for a moment, the expression which might have animated them, when, flushed with the promise of a glorious manhood, his youthful valour had achieved the victory of Montcontour. “Ah, Crichton,” sighed he, as he concluded, “the days of Tannegui

Du-Chatel, and Gaston de Foix are past.
With our brave father Henri de Valois,
chivalry expired ! ”

“ Say not so, Sire,” replied Crichton,
“ while yourself can yet wield a lance, and
while a Joyeuse, a D’Épernon, and a Saint-
Luc, yet live to raise their banners.”

“ To say nothing of a Crichton,” interrupted
Henri, “ whose name will gild our reign
hereafter, when others are forgotten.—With
the Béarnais in the field—the Balafré coquet-
ting with our crown, and our brother of
Anjou in open revolt against us, we have
need of loyal hearts and true. Joyeuse, *mon
enfant*, I heard thy voice just now—hast thou
not some stirring strain of knightly days, to
chime with the chord which chance has struck
within our breast ? ”

“ If such be your pleasure, my gracious
liege,” replied Joyeuse, “ you shall have the
lay of the truest knight that ever served
monarch of your realm—the valiant Constable
Bertrand Du Guesclin.”

With a fire and spirit which evinced how

completely the glorious prowess of the warrior whose brave deeds he celebrated was in unison with his own ardent aspirations after chivalrous renown, Joyeuse then sang, in a rich melodious voice, the following

Ballad of Du Guesclin. *

A SILVER shield the squire did wield, charged with an eagle black,
With talon red, and two-fold head, who followed on
the track

* The above lines are a free version of an 'olde gentil' Breton lay of the age of Charles V. of France, a stanza of which is subjoined, that the reader may have a taste of its freshness and simplicity. The ballad, we may observe, has remained wholly inedited until the recent publication by M. Crapelet of the golden Manuscript of the *Combat des Trentes* extracted from the *Bibliothèque du Roi*. We need not do more than quote it to enlist the reader's admiration in its behalf.

Le Distic de Mons. Bertran de Glasquin

Lescu dargent a . E. egle de sable
A . ij. testes et . E. roge baston
Pourtoist li preux le ballant connestable
Qui de Glasquin Bertran auoist a nom
A bron fu nes le chevalier breton
Preux et hardi courageux come . E. tor
Qui tant serui de louial cuer et de bon
Lescu dazur a . iii. flours de lis dor

Of the best knight that ere in fight hurled mace, or
couched the lance,
Du Guesclin named, who truncheon claimed as Con-
stable of France.
In Brittany, where Rennes* doth lie, Du Guesclin first
drew breath ;
Born for emprise—in counsel wise, brave, loyal unto
death.
With hand and sword, with heart and word, served
well this Baron bold
The azure scutcheon that displayed three fleurs-de-lis
of gold.†

II.

Like Guesclin bold of warriors old in prowess there
was none,
'Mid peers that stood 'round Arthur good, Baldwin or
brave Bouillon ;
Nor, as I ween, hath knighthood seen a chief more
puissantly
With staff advance the flower of France 'gainst hostile
chivalry.
—Guesclin is dead ! and with him fled the bravest and
the best,
That ever yet, by foe beset, maintained fair Gallia's
crest !

* The Chateau de la Motte-Broon, near Rennes.

† The royal arms of France.

‡ The cognizance of the house of Guise. The double cross of Lorrain was adopted as an ensign by the Leaguers, of whom the Duke of Guise, as is well known, was the prime mover ;—a circumstance which gave rise to the fol-

His soul God shrieve!—were he alive, his spear were
couched again
To guard the three gold lilies from the white cross of
Lorrain!‡

“ God rest the soul of the valiant Constable!” sighed Henri, as Joyeuse brought his ballad to a close. “ Would he were living now!—but wherefore,” he added, glancing affectionately at the Vicomte, “ should we indulge such a wish while thou, my gallant D’Arques, remainest to us?—With thee by our side,” continued he, smiling, “ we need have little anticipation of the third crown with which Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier promises to adorn our brow—Poland’s diadem we have already borne — that of France we now possess — but the Monk’s tonsure—”

“ Will become her brother the Balafré

lowing sarcastic and somewhat irreverent quatrain, quite in the spirit of the times :—

Mais, dites moi, que signifie
Que les Ligueurs ont double croix?—
C'est qu'en la Ligue on crucifie
Jesus-Christ encore une fois.

better than you, my gracious Liege," interrupted Joyeuse—" to Ades with the felon Cross of Lorrain and its supporters."

" Ah ! Joyeuse—my brother," said Henri, smiling affectionately, " thou art indeed as brave as Du Guesclin, as loyal as Bayard."

" Bayard !" exclaimed Crichton, " My heart leaps up at that name, as at the clarion's call. Would that my life might be like Bayard's ; and," added he fervently, " my life's close likewise ! "

" To that prayer I cry amen with my whole soul," said Joyeuse. " But while our hearts are warmed with the thoughts kindled by such glorious recollections, prithee, Crichton, clothe somewhat of their gallant deeds in thine inspiring verse. Thou art a minstrel worthy of Bayard. Even my friend Philippe Desportes must yield the palm of song to thee."

" Joyeuse is in the right," said Henri. " A nobler subject for the bard could not be found, nor better bard to rehearse such sub-

ject. Three well-beneficed abbeys were the meed of as many sonnets from Desportes.— We know not how we shall requite your performance, mon cher.”

“ Bestow not such unmerited praise on me, I beseech your Majesty,” replied Crichton, “ or I shall scarce adventure my lay upon a theme on which I own I cannot dwell without deepest emotion.”

“ First let us pledge the memory of the reproachless Chevalier,” said Henri, “ and then embalm his deeds in song.”

The goblets were filled — and drained. Crichton pronounced his pledge with devotion, and quaffed the sparkling contents of his wine-cup to the dregs.

In a tone, then, which showed how deeply his own sympathy was enlisted in the subject-matter of his strains,—with an unstudied simplicity of manner perfectly in unison with the minstrel measure he had chosen, and with much knightly fervour, he sang the following ballad :—

The Sword of Bayard.

I.

“A boon I crave, my Bayard brave:”—’twas thus
 King Francis spoke;
 “The field is won, the battle done,* yet deal one
 other stroke.
 For by this light, to dub us knight, none worthy is as
 thou,
 Whom nor reproach, nor fear approach, of prince or
 peer we trow.”
 “Sire!” said the knight, “you judge not right, who
 own a kingdom fair,
 ‘Neath his command all knights do stand—no service
 can he share.”
 “Nay! by our fay!” the King did say, “lo! at thy
 feet we kneel,
 Let silken rules sway tiltyard schools, *our* laws are
 here of steel.”

II.

With gracious mien did Bayard then, his sword draw
 from his side;
 “By God! Saint Michael! and Saint George! I dub
 thee knight!” he cried.

* The famous engagement with the Swiss, near Milan, in which Francis the First came off victorious. Fleuranges places the ceremony of the King’s knighthood *before* the battle. The “Loyal Servant,” however, states that it occurred, as is most probable, after the conflict.

“ Arise, good King ! weal may this bring—such grace
 on thee confer,
 As erst from blow of Charles did flow, Roland or
 Oliver !”
 With belted blade the King arrayed—the knight the
 spur applied,
 And then his neck with chain did deck—and accolade
 supplied—
 “ Do thy devoir at ghostly choir—maintain high
 courtesie,
 And from the fray in war’s array, God grant thou
 never flee !”

III.

“ Certes, good blade,”* then Bayard said, his own
 sword waving high,
 “ Thou shalt, perdie, as relic be preserved full
 carefully !
 Right fortunate art thou, good sword, a King so brave
 to knight !
 And with strong love, all arms above, rest honoured in
 my sight.
 And never more, as heretofore, by Christian chivalry,
 My trenchant blade, shalt thou be rayed, or e'er en-
 dangered be !

* “Tu es bien heureuse d’avoir aujourd’hui, à un si beau et si puissant Roi, donné l’orde de chevalerie. Certes, ma bonne épée, vous serez comme reliques gardée, et sur tout autre honorée !” *Precis de la Chevalerie.*

For Paynim foes reserve thy blows—the Saracen and Moor

Thine edge shall smite in bitter fight, or merciless estour!"*

IV.

Years since that day have rolled away, and Bayard hurt to death,

'Neath gray Rebecco's walls outstretch'd, exhales his latest breath.

On Heaven he cried or ere he died—but cross had none, I wist,

Save that good sword-hilt cruciform, which with pale lips he kissed.†

Knight! whom reproach could ne'er approach, no name like unto thine,

With honour bright, unsullied, white, on Fame's proud scroll shall shine!

But were it not to mortal lot denied by grace divine,
Should Bayard's breath, and Bayard's death, and his good sword be mine!

* Estour—a grand mêlée.

† " This sword has been lost. Charles Emanuel, Duke of Savoy, requested it of Bayard's heirs. One of them, Charles Du Motet, Lord of Chichiliane, sent him, in default of it, the battle-axe of which Bayard made use. The Duke told the Dauphinese gentleman, when he wrote to thank him for the present, ' That in the midst of the pleasure he felt at beholding this weapon placed in the worthiest part of his gallery, he could scarce choose but regret, that it was not in such good hands as of its original owner' "—*Champier*. — See also the account of Bayard's death in the *Chronicle of the Loyal Servant*.

“Bravo!” exclaimed Joyeuse—“may the same spirit which animated Bayard animate you on the morrow !

A bien jouter gardez votre querelle
Et vous serez honorez et chéris,

as runs the old refrain. ‘*Souviens-toi*’ (as the pursuivants-at-arms are wont to cheer us at the tourney) ‘*de qui tu es fils, et ne forgive pas !*’”

“My father’s sword will, I trust, be grasped by no degenerate hand,” replied Crichton, smiling, “and prove as fortunate in my hand as Orlando’s resistless blade Durandal, or thy namesake Joyeuse, the trenchant weapon of Charlemagne. I shall neither forget of what worthy gentleman I am the son, nor,” added he, glancing at Esclairmonde, “of what fair dame, the servant.”

“Will not the dame you serve,” asked the Vicomte, smiling “in accordance with the good old practice of chivalry, too much neglected, I grieve to say, now-a-days, bestow some token or favour upon you ? The Dame

de Fluxas gave her sleeve to Bayard, when he gained the prize of the tourney at Carignan."

"I have no other token but this to bestow," said Esclairmonde, crimsoning to the temples, and detaching a knot of ribands from her hair, "which I now give to the Chevalier Crichton, and pray him to wear for my sake."

Crichton took the gage, and pressing it to his lips, exclaimed with fervour—"I will bear it upon my lance; and if my adversary boast like token of his lady's favour, I trust to lay it as an offering at your feet."

"No more," interrupted Henri impatiently, "we ourselves will break a lance in your be-hoof, belle Esclairmonde, and here appoint you Queen of the Lists—remember, messeigneurs, the heralds will proclaim the jousts to-morrow—we ourselves will enter the lists which we will have appointed with more than usual magnificence. And now," added he gallantly, "that we have listened to the lay of preux chevalier, we trust the response of gentle

dame will not be denied us. Our fair Torigni, we know, hath a witching skill upon the lyre, but the voice we chiefly desire to hear is that of our lovely neighbour. Nay, fair Demoiselle, by our crown we are peremptory, and will take no refusal. She whose lightest tones are music, cannot be held excused on plea of want of skill. You need but link your voice with the words of some simple legend, and we will engage that your performance shall exceed in attraction the most finished effort of our choicest Italian *cantatrice*, even though your opponent should be, (with a glance at Crichton) the divine Gelosa herself, whose notes attracted all our good citizens to the Hôtel de Bourbon."

Aware that remonstrance would be unavailing, with the best grace she could assume, and in a voice the tones of which, as Henri justly remarked, were perfectly musical, Esclairmonde, without hesitation complied with the King's request; and with much natural and touching pathos executed the following Romance :—

Yusef and Zorayda.*

I.

THROUGH the Vega of Granada, where the silver
 Darro glides—
 From his tower within the Alpujar— swift— swift
 Prince Yusef rides
 To her who holds his heart in thrall—a captive
 Christian maid—
 On wings of fear and doubt he flies, of sore mischance
 afraid.
 For ah! full well doth Yusef know with what relent-
 less ire,
 His love for one of adverse faith is noted by his sire :
 “ Zorayda mine!” he cries aloud—on—on his courser
 strains—
 “ Zorayda mine!—thine Yusef comes!”—the Alham-
 bra walls he gains.

II.

Through the marble Court of Lions—to the stately
 Tocador—
 To Lindaraxa’s bower he goes—the Queen he stands
 before ;

* The incidents of this Ballad are, with some slight variation, derived from those of the exquisite French Romance *Flore et Blancheflor*; the date of which may be referred to the Thirteenth Century, and which unquestionably, as its recent Editor, M. Paulin Paris, supposes, is of Spanish or Moorish origin.

Her maidens round his mother group—but not a word
she speaks.

In vain amid that lovely throng one lovelier form he
seeks;

In vain he tries mid orient eyes orbs darker far to
meet;

No form so light, no eyes so bright, as her's his
vision greet.

“Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine!—ah whither art thou
fled?”

A low, low wail returns his cry—a wail as for the
dead.

III.

No answer made his mother, but her hand gave to her
son—

To the garden of the Generalif together are they gone;
Where gushing fountains cool the air—where scents
the citron pale,

Where nightingales in concert fond rehearse their
love-lorn tale,

Where roses link'd with myrtles make green woof
against the sky,

Half hidden by their verdant screen a sepulchre doth lie:

“Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine—ah! wherefore art
thou flown,

To gather flowers in Yemen's bowers while I am left
alone?”

IV.

Upon the ground kneels Yusef—his heart is like to
break;

In vain the Queen would comfort him—no comfort
will he take.

His blinded gaze he turns upon that sculptured marble fair,
Embossed with gems, and glistening with coloured pebbles rare ;
Red stones of Ind—black, vermeil, green, their mingled hues combine,
With jacinth, sapphire, amethyst, and diamond of the mine.
“ Zorayda mine — Zorayda mine ! ” — thus ran sad Yusef’s cry,
“ Zorayda mine, within this tomb, ah ! sweet one ! dost thou lie ? ”

V.

Upon that costly sepulchre, two radiant forms are seen
In sparkling alabaster carv’d, like crystal in its sheen ;
The one as Yusef fashioned, a golden crescent bears,
The other, as Zorayda wrought, a silver crosslet wears.
And ever as soft zephyr sighs, the pair his breath obey,
And meet within each other’s arms like infants in their play.
“ Zorayda fair—Zorayda fair—” thus golden letters tell—
“ A Christian maid lies buried here—by Moslem loved too well.”

VI.

Three times those golden letters with grief sad Yusef reads,
To tears and frantic agony a fearful calm succeeds—

“ Ah ! wo is me ! Zorayda mine—ah ! would the self-same blow
That laid thee 'neath this mocking tomb, had laid thy lover low !
Two faithful hearts, like ours, in vain stern death may strive to sever—
A moment more, the pang is o'er, the grave unites us ever.
Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine !—this dagger sets me free—
Zorayda mine—look down—look down—thus—thus I come to thee ! ”

VII.

“ Hold ! Yusef, hold ! ” a voice exclaims, “ thy loved Zorayda lives—
Thy constancy is well approved—thy sire his son forgives.
Thine ardent passion doubting long—thy truth I thus have tried,
Behold her whom thy faith hath won !—receive her as thy bride ! ”
In Yusef’s arms—to Yusef’s heart, Zorayda close is press’d,
Half stifled by a flood of joy, these words escape his breast :—
“ Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine !—ah ! doubly dear thou art !—
Uninterrupted bliss be ours, whom death has fail’d to part ! ”

The Monarch’s loud applauses at the close of the song were reiterated to the echo by

the assemblage. Crimsoning with shame, Esclairmonde ventured a glance towards her lover, whose silent admiration was of more value in her eyes than the courtly compliments which were so freely lavished upon her efforts.

“ And now for the lay of the belle Torigni,” said Henri, “ her songs are wont to be of a more sprightly description — ah ! Signorina mia ! Shall we sue in vain ? ”

Torigni needed little pressing ; but with much archness and spirit, complied with the King’s request in the following madrigal : —

Yolande.*

A GOLDEN flower embroidering,
A lay of love low murmuring ;
Secluded in the eastern tower
Sits fair Yolande within her bower :
Fair—fair Yolande !

* This song is a very free adaptation of a sparkling little romance by *Audefroy-le-Bastard* to be found in the *Roman-cero Francois*, entitled *Bele Yolans*. Much liberty has been taken with the concluding stanza—indeed the song altogether bears but slight resemblance to its original.

Suddenly a voice austere,
 With sharp reproof breaks on her ear :—
 Her mother 'tis who silently
 Has stolen upon her privacy—

Ah ! fair Yolande !

“ Mother ! why that angry look ?—
 Mother ! why that sharp rebuke ?
 Is it that I while away
 My solitude with amorous lay ?
 Or, is it that my thread of gold
 Idly I weave, that thus you scold

Your own Yolande—your own Yolande ?”

II.

“ It is not that you while away
 Your solitude with amorous lay,
 It is not that your thread of gold
 Idly you weave, that thus I scold

My fair Yolande !

“ Your want of caution 'tis I chide ;—
 The Baron fancies that you hide,
 Beneath the cushion on your knee,
 A letter from the Count Mahi :—

Ah ! fair Yolande !

“ Busy tongues have filled his brain
 With jealousy and frantic pain ;
 Hither hastens he with his train !—
 And if a letter there should be
 Concealed 'neath your embroidery ?
 Say no more, but give it me,

My own Yolande—my own Yolande ”

“ By our Lady!” exclaimed Henri, laughing, “ that ditty likes us well. Samson, a cup of Syracuse—messeigneurs, we pledge our fair minstrels—Ah!—par la Mort dieu! —we have a feeling of such unwonted exhilaration in our heart, that we must perforce give vent to it in song. Our Hippocrène is this fiery wine—our inspiration the lovely Esclairmonde.”

This gracious intimation, on the part of his Majesty, was received, as might be anticipated, coming from such a quarter, with acclamations.

“ Henri is certainly drunk, Abbé,” observed Joyeuse.

“ Beyond a doubt,” returned Brantôme, shaking his head, and perfectly unconscious of his own condition, “ wine speedily assaults *his* brain—ha—ha.—But dont you perceive, my dear Vicomte, that the banquet draws to a close?”

“ Do you think so?” asked Torigni—“ my heart flutters very unaccountably,—Monsieur le Vicomte, bid your page give me the least

possible drop of Cyprus. I have not entirely recovered the shock her Majesty of Navarre gave me."

"Or the effects of Crichton's billet," returned Brantôme, hemming significantly.

"His Majesty's song," interposed Joyeuse.

With a taste and skill that showed how highly cultivated had been such musical talent as he possessed, Henri then gave the following rondel, which we shall name after her whose charms furnished the monarch with a theme:—

Esclairmonde.

I.

THE crown is proud
 That decks our brow;
 The laugh is loud—
 That glads us now.
 The sounds that fall
 Around—above
 Are laden all
 With love—with loye—
 With love—with love.

II.

Heaven cannot show,
'Mid all its sheen
Orbs of such glow
As here are seen.
And monarch ne'er
Exulting own'd,
Queen might compare
With Esclairmonde—
With Esclairmonde.

III.

From Bacchus' fount,
Deep draughts we drain ;
Their spirits mount,
And fire our brain ;
But in our heart
Of hearts enthroned,
From all apart,
Rests Esclairmonde—
Rests Esclairmonde.

“ Perfect ! ” exclaimed Ronsard—
“ Perfect ! ” repeated every voice.
“ His late Majesty Charles IX. never im-
provised strains more delightful,” continued
the bard.

“Never,” replied Chicot, “Charles’s unpremeditated strains being generally understood to be *your* composition, Monsieur de Ronsard. I think nothing of them. Mediocrity is the prerogative of royalty. A good king must be a bad poet. But you have all praised his Majesty’s performance, now listen to the moral of the story—though morality, I must own, is a little out of fashion in the Louvre.” And mimicking, so far as he dared, the looks and tones of the King, the Jester commenced his parody as follows:—

The crown is proud
But brings it peace?
The laugh is loud—
Full soon ’twill cease.
The sounds that fall
From lightest breath,
Are laden all
With death—with death.
With death—with death.

“Enough, and too much,” interrupted Henri, “we will not have our flow of spirits checked by thy raven croaking. Be prepared,” whispered he, “with the signal;

and now messeigneurs," continued the King, "the night wears—the music sounds again—the new masque of 'Circe and her nymphs' awaits you.—Nay, mignonne," added he, in a low impassioned tone, and forcibly detaining Esclairmonde, "you must remain with me."

At this hint from the monarch the guests arose; and each gallant taking a dame under his arm, left the banquet-hall. Crichton and Torigni were the last to quit the room. A significant look passed between the Scot and Chicot as he lingered for an instant at the door-way, the meaning of which the latter appeared clearly to comprehend, for waving his hand, as if in obedience to the royal command, the perfumed torches were suddenly (as at a preconcerted signal) extinguished. Page, valet, usher, and buffoon disappeared—the tapestry was swiftly drawn together—the valves were closed—and Henri was left in darkness with the Demoiselle.

All this was the work of a moment. The King was taken a little by surprise. Chicot had given the signal sooner than he intended.

Concluding himself alone with Esclairmonde, Henri uttered a passionate exclamation, at the same time endeavouring to obtain possession of her hand. The Demoiselle, however, with a cry of terror, eluded his grasp, and fled, so far as she was able to determine in the obscurity in which all was wrapped, towards the door.

“ Ah!—ah! fair bird!—you cannot escape me now,” exclaimed Henri exultingly, following in pursuit.

And as he spoke, with outstretched hands he grasped at something which, in the darkness, appeared to be the flying figure of the damsel. The sudden prostration of his royal person, and the subsequent loud jingle of falling glass, mixed with the clatter of plate, soon convinced him of his error; while a stifled laugh, proceeding, as he thought, from the Demoiselle, completed his mortification.

The King arose, but said nothing, and, suspending his own respiration, listened intently. For a moment not a sound was heard. Henri then thought he detected a

light step stealing towards the other side of the room, and directed his attention to that quarter. A noise as of arras being raised, followed by a faint creak, such as might be produced by a sliding panel, was just audible.

“Diable! — the secret door — can she have discovered that?” — ejaculated Henri, rushing in the direction of the sound — “she may elude me after all.”

A frolic laugh, however, issuing from a different part of the chamber, and which questionless originated with his innamorata, satisfied him that she was still in the room! Gliding noiselessly forward, guided by the sound, ere another instant he had grasped a small soft hand, which he covered with a thousand kisses, and which, strange to say, rather warmly returned his pressure.

Henri was in positive raptures.

“How much one may be deceived!” exclaimed the enamoured monarch. “This delightful gloom makes all the difference

in the world. I was quite right to have the torches extinguished. You, fair Esclairmonde, who, a few minutes ago, were all coyness and reserve,—a very '*belle dame sans merci*',—are as amiable and complaisant as—(whom shall we say?) as the obliging Torigni."

"Ah, Sire!" murmured a low voice.

"I' faith, fair Demoiselle," continued the delighted Henri, "so charming do we find you, that we are half tempted to become a heretic ourselves. On those lips we could embrace any faith proposed to us—"

At this moment a hollow voice breathed in the very portals of his ear these words—"VILAIN HERODES"—an anagram, we may remark, framed by the Jacobins upon his own name—Henri de Valois.

The King started, and trembled.

We have before stated, that he was bigoted and superstitious to the last degree. His hand now shook so much, that he could scarcely retain the fair fingers he held within his grasp.

“ Did *you* speak, Demoiselle ?” asked he, after an instant’s pause.

“ Not a syllable, Sire,” replied his companion.

“ Your voice appears strangely altered,” returned Henri. “ I scarcely recognise its tones as those of Esclairmonde.”

“ Your Majesty’s hearing deceives you,” returned the Lady.

“ So much so,” replied Henry, “ that I could almost fancy I had heard your voice under similar circumstances before. This shows how one may be mistaken.”

“ It does indeed,” replied the Lady, “ but perhaps your Majesty found the voice to which you allude more agreeable than mine.”

“ By no means,” replied Henri.

“ You would not then have me change places with any other ?” asked the Lady, timidly.

“ Not for our kingdom,” exclaimed Henri, “ would we have any one else in your place ! She of whom I spoke was very different from you, ma mie.”

“Are you quite sure of that, Sire?”

“As of my salvation,” replied Henri, passionately.

“Of which thou art by no means assured,” breathed the deep sepulchral voice in his ears.

“There — again — did you hear nothing, Demoiselle?” asked the King, in new alarm.

“Nothing whatever,” rejoined the Lady. “What odd fancies you must have, Sire!”

“Odd, indeed!” answered Henri, trembling. “I begin to think I acted wrongly in loving a Huguenot. — *Par la Saint-Barthelemy!* you must reform your faith, Demoiselle.”

“*Tis thou, Henri de Valois, who must reform,*” returned the sepulchral voice, “*or thy days are numbered.*”

“*Averte faciem tuam à peccatis meis!*” exclaimed the terrified King, dropping on his knees, “*et omnes iniquitates meas dele!*”

“What ails your Majesty?” asked his companion.

“Hence—hence—fair delusion!” exclaimed Henri—“*avoid thee!—Docebo iniquos vias tuas, Domine!*”

“ Trouble not the virtuous Huguenot,” continued the voice.

“ *In peccatis concepit me mater,*” continued Henri.

“ True,” replied the voice, “ or the memory of Fernelius hath been scandalously calumniated.”

“ Fernelius !” echoed Henri, scarcely comprehending what was said to him, and fancying in his terror that the voice had acknowledged itself to belong to the shade of his mother’s departed physician—“ Art thou the spirit of Fernelius arisen from purgatory to torment me ?”

“ Even so,” was the solemn response.

“ I will have nightly masses said for the repose of thy soul, unhappy Fernelius,” continued the King—“ so thou wilt no more perplex me—*In Paradisam deducant te Angeli ! Suscipient Martyres !*”

“ Thou must do more,” returned the voice.

“ I will do any thing—every thing you enjoin, gracious Fernelius,” said the King.

“Cherish thy Jester Chicot,” continued the voice.

“As my brother,” answered the King.

“Not as thy brother—but as thyself,” returned the shade of Fernelius.

“I will—I will,” replied Henri—“what more?”

“Abandon this vain quest of the virtuous Esclairmonde, and return to her whom thou hast abandoned.”

“Whom mean you?” asked the King, somewhat perplexed—“to whom have your words especial reference, most excellent Fernelius—to my Queen Louise?”

“To the Demoiselle Torigni,” rejoined the voice.

“Torigni!” echoed Henri, despairingly—“any of my former mistresses were preferable to *her*. Is there no other alternative?”

“None whatever,” sternly answered the spectre.

“Sooner then,” replied Henri, “will I incur—ha!—diable!—a ghost indulge in mer-

riment—this is some trick—” exclaimed he, suddenly recovering his confidence, and starting to his feet, while, with his right hand, he grasped at some object near him.—“ We have traitors here,” continued he, as steps were heard retreating.—“ This is no ghost —no Fernelius—”

“ What in the name of wonder has your Majesty been talking about all this time?” asked the Lady with affected astonishment.

“ You shall hear anon.—’Fore Heaven, Demoiselle, you will have reason to repent this conduct—and your accomplice likewise will rue his rashness. We can readily divine who is the author of this mistaken pleasantry. What ho! lights! lights!” And applying a whistle to his lips, the doors were instantly thrown open, and the attendants rushed in with flambeaux.

The torch-light fell upon the monarch and his companion. Abashed probably at the presence of so many spectators, the Lady covered her face with her hands.

“ Look up, Demoiselle!” ejaculated Henri,

angrily — “ Nay, we will not spare your blushes, depend upon it. Our whole court shall learn the trick you would have put upon your sovereign :—our whole court shall witness your exposure. Look up, we say—if your effrontery could carry you thus far, it may bear you still farther.—A few moments since the laugh was on *your* side, it is now on *ours* — ha!— ha!— Par dieu !—we would not spare you this infliction for our best Barony. Look up — look up, Demoiselle Esclairmonde—”

And forcibly withdrawing the hands of the Lady, her features were revealed to the general gaze.

They were those of Torigni !

Despite the presence in which they stood, the courtiers found it impossible to repress a smile.

“ Diantre !” exclaimed Henri, pettishly—
“ Duped !—deceived !—what—what has become of Esclairmonde ?”

At this moment the crowd respectfully drew aside, and the Queen Louise stepped forward.

"The Demoiselle Esclairmonde has placed herself under my protection," said she, approaching his Majesty.

"Under *your* protection, Louise!" said the Monarch, in amazement. "Do *you* afford sanctuary to a Huguenot? By the four Evangelists! Madame, we esteemed you too good a Catholic to hazard even the chance contamination of a heretic's presence."

"I trust I may sympathize with the distress of those whose opinions differ from my own, without offence to Him who is in Himself all charity," replied Louise, mildly. "And in this case, where innocence and purity have sought refuge with me, I could lay little claim to the first of Christian virtues—Mercy—had I refused it. I have passed my word for her safety."

"You have done wisely—very wisely—I must say, Madame," exclaimed Henri, contemptuously, "and no doubt your Father Confessor will concur with your sentiments. We shall see. I shall not argue the point now. There is one person, however, with

whom we *can* deal—Where is the Demoiselle's loyal servant?—Where is Crichton?—*He* has not taken shelter under your wing likewise.—Your word, we conclude, is not passed for *him*.”

“ The Chevalier Crichton has quitted the Louvre, Henri,” replied Louise.

“ Impossible!” exclaimed the King—“ the gates are closed by an express order.”

“ He is gone nevertheless,” rejoined Torigni.

“ Gone!” echoed Henry—“ By your contrivance, Madame,” added he, looking angrily at the Queen.

“ No, Henri,” replied Louise, gently, “ neither had he a hand in Esclairmonde's liberation. The Demoiselle sought me alone.”

“ How then did he contrive his flight?” demanded the king, turning to Torigni.

Torigni glanced towards the secret panel and nodded. Henri understood her.

“ Enough,” said he, “ I see it all, but where is *your* accomplice—the spectre?”

“ Here—Sire—here,” cried Du Halde, dragging forth Chicot, whose feet he had de-

tected peeping from under the table—"here is—"

"The Doctor Fernelius," replied the Jester, with a look of droll contrition—"pardon—pardon, Sire."

"Thou, Fernelius!" exclaimed Henri, who, notwithstanding his displeasure, could scarcely forbear laughing at Chicot's grimaces. "How didst thou produce those awful sounds, thou treacherous knave?"

"By this tube," replied Chicot, holding up the sarbacane of the Vicomte de Joyeuse.

"You must own I played my part with spirit."

"A sarbacane!" exclaimed Henri—"henceforth we banish all tubes of this description from the Louvre, and thou mayst thank our clemency, deceitful varlet, that we banish not thee along with them."

"Surely your Majesty would not pass a sentence of self-exile," returned the Jester.

"Recollect, Sire, you promised the worthy Fernelius to cherish me as yourself."

"Coquin," cried Henri, "we are half dis-

posed to send thee to keep Fernelius company. But enough of this. *Joyeuse*," added he, " go with thy followers to the *Hôtel de Soissons*, and if thou encounterest this wayward Crichton or our Mask within its walls, place both under arrest till to-morrow. Lose not a moment on the way. Madame, we attend you."

CHAPTER X.

THE HÔTEL DE SOISSONS.

Voilà donc son exécrable palais ! palais de la luxure, palais de la trahison, palais de tous les crimes !—

VICTOR HUGO.

QUITTING the Louvre, its festivities, and its enraged and discomfited monarch, we shall now descend into the gardens of the palace, and pursue the foot-steps of a masked Cavalier, who, wrapped in the folds of a sable domino, took his hasty way through its embowered walks, and trim arcades.

The whole of the space now crowded by the courts and other buildings forming the offices of the Louvre was, at the period of our nar-

rative, disposed in noble alleys, bordered with exquisite shrubs—shadowed by tall trees—with here and there terraces and patches of the smoothest verdure—balustraded with marble steps and low pillars—and watered by gushing fountains of the clearest crystal; anon diverging into laybrinths and bowers, in which gleamed Faunus or Diana, or haply some “nymph to the bath addressed,” and displaying throughout, the luxury and magnificence of the monarch (François I), by whom this plaisir had been laid out.

The moon shone clear and cold in the highest heavens as the Cavalier hurried swiftly through this region of beauty. For one instant he paused to gaze at the wing of the Louvre fronting the spot on which he stood. The casements were brightly illumined with the torches of the fête—the music resounded blithely from afar—but the Masker’s eye rested not upon these festive lights, nor did he listen to those gay symphonies. His eye was fixed upon a lamp shining like a star from one of the higher towers (of the period of

Philip Augustus) that flanked the palace, and his ear was strained to catch the faint sound produced by the closing of a lattice. He then plunged into a dark avenue of clipped yews before him.

The *plaisance* we have described was bordered on the one hand by the waters of the Seine, across which river chains were drawn so as to cut off all approach in this quarter, while, on the other, it was defended by a turreted wall and external moat, which separated it from the encroaching buildings of the Rue du Coq. Emerging suddenly from the labyrinth in which he had disappeared, the Cavalier stood beneath the shade of a spreading elm, whose branches overtopped the wall upon which he gazed.

The figure of a man-at-arms, with arquebuss in hand, was seen slowly parading the rampart-walk, his helm and habergeon of steel gleaming in the pallid moonlight. To divest himself of his domino, underneath which appeared a rich satin ball-room costume—to swathe the folds of the cloak

around his left arm, and with his right hand to pluck his poignard from its sheath, and strike it deeply into the bark of the tree, by which means he rapidly climbed it—to pass along its branches—to drop within a few paces of the astonished arquebusier—and swift as thought to place the weapon at his throat, was with the Cavalier little more than the work of a moment.

So unexpected had been the assault, that the man-at-arms scarcely attempted any resistance, and was so closely griped, as to be unable to raise a cry: his arquebuss was wrested from his hold and hurled into the foss; while his antagonist, having apparently accomplished his purpose in disarming him, bounded over the parapet of the wall, and, clinging to the rough side of a buttress, descended with the utmost velocity and certainty to the very edge of the water, where, taking advantage of a projecting stone, he contrived to bring both feet together, and with a single spring cleared the wide deep moat, and alighted in safety on the other

side—disappearing instantly afterwards in the far-cast shadows of the gloomy Rue du Coq—and accomplishing what appeared in the eyes of the arquebusier, who had watched his efforts from above, a marvellous and almost superhuman feat.

“Mille tonnerres!” exclaimed the man-at-arms, who had made sure that the Cavalier would have fallen midway into the moat, rubbing his eyes in astonishment as he beheld him arrive on the opposite bank, “it must be the fiend in person:” whereupon he devoutly crossed himself, adding, “no man of mortal mould, save one, perchance, could have taken that leap, and he who might have done it, the Scottish galliard Crichton, people say, *is* something more than mortal. I recollect seeing him leap five-and-twenty feet in the hall of arms, but that was nothing to this moat, which, if it be an inch, must span nine yards, with scarcely a resting-place for the point of a toe to spring from—to say nothing of a run. Tu-dieu!—if it *be* the Seigneur Crichton, and *he* be not the Devil,

he has had a narrow escape of it to night, in more ways than one; for had he passed through any gate of the Louvre, instead of down that break-neck wall, he had encountered the dagger of Maurevert, or some of Madame Catherine's assassins. Notre-Dame! if it be Crichton I am not sorry he has escaped, as we shall have the combat to-morrow in that case—but peste! why did he throw away my arquebuss?"

With his vain lamentation, and his vain search for his gun, we shall leave the man-at-arms, and once more track the steps of the Cavalier, who had no sooner gained the shelter of the houses, than he resumed his domino. Swiftly shaping his course through the deserted streets, he glided along like a phantom, without encountering so much as a stray sergeant of the *guet royal*, some of whom were, for the most part, to be met with at all hours in this frequented quarter, when, at the very moment he passed it, the door of a small tavern, the Falcon, situate where the Rue Pelican turns from the Rue

Saint-Honoré, was suddenly thrown open, and forth issued two roystering blades, members of the University, it would seem from their scholastic caps and garbs, who had evidently, from their gait, been indulging in copious libations, and were now, in all probability, retreating to their place of rest for the night.

In figure, the one was tall, light, and not without a certain air of dignity in his deportment. Despite its uncertainty, his step was light and agile as that of a mountaineer, and about his shoulders light, long, yellow hair depended in great profusion. The second Scholar was more squarely and stoutly built, and moved forward as if urged into his present quick movement by the energy of his companion. A small square cap surmounted a head of rough brown curling hair, shading an open manly countenance, lighted up by a keen gray eye, sparkling at this moment with unwonted fire. His whole appearance, while it betokened the possession of great personal

strength, showed also that his vigour was united with a sluggish and inert temperament. With a step almost as heavy as that of his master, a huge dog plodded at his heels, bearing undoubted marks of his English origin. And if any doubts could be entertained as to what country either dog or master might belong, the Student settled that question by roaring at the top of a strenuous voice the following chant in a tongue, which requires no translation on our part to place it before the reader.

Alle and Sack.

I.

YOUR Gaul may tipple his thin, thin wine,
And prate of its hue, and its fragrance fine,
Shall never a drop pass throat of mine

Again—again !

His claret is meagre (but let that pass),
I can't say much for his hippocrass,
And never more will I fill my glass
With cold champaign.

II.

But froth me a flagon of English ale,
Stout, and old, and as amber pale,
Which heart and head will alike assail—

Ale—ale be mine !

Or brew me a pottle of sturdy sack,
Sherris and spice, with a toast to its back,
And need shall be none to bid me attack

That drink divine !

The reader, we imagine, will have been at no loss to discover in these Students our somewhat neglected friends Ogilvy and Blount. To the Cavalier also they would appear to be equally well known, for he instantly joined them, addressing the former by his name.

Ogilvy at once came to a halt, uttering an exclamation of delight and astonishment.

“ You are fortunately encountered, Jasper,” said the Cavalier ; “ you can serve me.”

“ Show me but how !” exclaimed Ogilvy—“ my arm shall second your wishes.”

“ If your head have discretion enough to guide it, I am assured it will,” returned the

Cavalier, “but the enterprise on which I am bent requires coolness as well as courage, and you were better able to assist me had your libations been poured from the fountain rather than from the wine-flask.”

“Our libations have been poured forth in honour of the victor of the University of Paris – of the Admirable Crichton,” returned Ogilvy, somewhat reproachfully — “and if blame is to be attached to our carouse, he who is the cause of it must be content to bear the burthen. My pulse beats quick ‘tis true, but my brain is calm enough—and if need be, I will plunge into the first well we encounter on our road.”

“And I,” said Blount, “have little to observe, noble Sir, except that I will follow wherever you list to lead me. The wines I have swallowed — as sour as Flemish beer, with (Heaven save the mark!) your honoured name upon my lips ; and the stupifying *herbe à la reine*, as these Frenchmen call their tobacco leaves, which I have puffed away, may have muddled my intellects : but they

have not extinguished my courage. I can, if need be, put some guard upon my tongue, having no great fancy for talking at any time. And I can still (I would fain hope) wield staff or sword, as occasion may require, to some purpose. But if I should fail in my *devoir*, there is a follower at my heels, whose brain is at all seasons as bright as my own ; who is no toper ; and who will serve you loyally, tooth and nail.—*What ho, Druid !* ”

A deep-toned growl from the dog answered his master’s call.

“ *Brave dog,* ” said the Cavalier, patting the animal’s leathern side, “ *would thou couldst go with me !* ”

“ *By Saint-Dunstan ! he shall go with you, if you desire it, noble Sir,* ” rejoined Blount.

“ *Will he, then, leave his master ?* ” asked the Cavalier, incredulously.

“ *He will do aught he bids him,* ” answered Blount. “ *Here, Sirrah,* ” and stooping for an instant, he muttered somewhat in *Druid’s* ear, accompanying his intimation with an emphatic

gesture, perfectly intelligible, it would seem, to the dog, who instantly quitted his side and attached himself to that of the Cavalier. “ He will not quit you now, till I recal him,” said Blount.—“ Druid knows his duty as well as the most trusty retainer.”

“ His sagacity is indeed wonderful,” said the Cavalier, “ and I thank you for your confidence in trusting me with so valued a friend. But I pray you to recal your boon. The risk I run is imminent.”

“ I have given you my dog as a gage, noble Sir,” returned Blount, firmly, “ and I may as well throw my own life into the bargain, seeing that I would almost as soon part with one as the other. I give you both, therefore, freely. Be the result of this adventure—whither tending, to what concerning, I know not—what it may, it matters not ; my prayers are soon said ; my tenure to this world is but slight ; and I have never yet heard of the danger I would not confront ; in which respect I am somewhat of honest Druid’s opinion, who holds all antagonists unworthy of his teeth who

will not rouse his ire ; and who will not turn his back on any beast that ever walked.—Lead on, Sir, I have that within me that prompts me to be doing.”

“ And you, Jasper Ogilvy ? ”—

A tight grasp of the Cavalier’s hand was all Ogilvy’s answer.

“ Enough,” said the Cavalier, hastening forward.

And as they proceeded with the same rapid pace as heretofore, the Mask briefly developed his project.

“ And so the Geloso, whom that assassin Spaniard stabbed, turns out to be a girl after all,” said Ogilvy.—The interest I felt in her behalf is not so unaccountable as I conceived it to be.—Right gladly will I lend a hand to her deliverance from this cursed Astrologer’s roost, and from her persecutor. I marvelled much to see you in that mask and guise, but now ’tis all explained. — You are in the right to undertake her rescue ; and were none other to be found, I would alone attempt

it. A maiden!— by my troth 'tis passing strange!"

" Not so strange, friend Jasper," remarked the Englishman, laughing, " as the change which this metamorphosis, in point of sex, appears to have wrought in thy sentiments. This morning thou hadst a holy horror, worthy of John Knox himself, of every thing savouring of a player. Now, when a pair of bright eyes stare thee in the face, thou carest not to avow thine errors. Ah! I fear thou art fallen into the wiles of the enemy. Those dark looks and dark eyes are but snares, Jasper, and her calling is a vain one."

" Tush!" returned Ogilvy, " my abomination of her calling is not a whit diminished. And if I have expressed any concern respecting her, it is because—"

" She finds favour in thine eyes—I am at no loss to perceive it," rejoined the Englishman.

" No such thing," answered Ogilvy, sharply; " and if you repeat that assertion, Master Blount, I shall think you desire to put an

intentional affront upon me. I repeat I care not for the girl. Of a verity she *hath* charms. But what of that? Marian Graham, to whom I plighted my troth, hath a far sweeter smile, though her eyes may not be so bright, or her tresses so near rival to the raven's wing. I care not for her—nay, now I bethink me of her calling, were it not the pleasure of my patron and friend that I should accompany him upon this adventure, she might even tarry with Ruggieri in his observatory, for any effort I would make to release her."

"Your want of interest in her occasions some slight discrepancy in your sentiments, Jasper," returned Blount, laughing. "But since you find the matter irksome, leave it to us, and return to the Ecossais. We will accomplish the adventure alone I warrant you."

"No!" exclaimed Ogilvy, impatiently, "it shall never be said—"

And he was proceeding with some warmth, when his speech was cut short by the Cavalier who addressed him with some coolness—"It was not without reason, Jasper, that I told

thee thy tongue was scarcely under the control of thy reason. I may not accept of thy assistance, if I am to purchase it at the hazard of failure."

Thus rebuked, the choleric Scot held his peace, and the party moved on for some moments in silence.

Arrived within the Rue des Deux-Ecus, at that time shadowed by the tall trees which formed the avenues and groves of Catherine's stately gardens, the Cavalier, pointing out the high belvidere, of vast Palladian structure, constituting the Hôtel de la Reine, now distinctly defined against the fleecy clouds of the moon-lit sky, exclaimed—"you now behold the castle of the Enchantress. I have not disguised the peril you will incur by entering it. Will you go on?"

Both answers were in the affirmative. The party, therefore, turned the corner of the palace, and entering the adjoining Rue du Four, along one side of which its lofty walls ran, the principal front of the magnificent building, and its grand portal, erected by

Bullan upon the model of the Farnese Palace at Caprarola (upon which an immense shield of marble displayed the blazon and cipher of the Queen-Mother) were at once brought into view. In that still hour and in that mysterious light, there was something ominous in the appearance of the gigantic building which stood before them. In no instance, perhaps, was the superstition of Catherine's character more strongly evidenced, than in the construction of this proud but needless palace — needless, we say, because she had already expended vast sums upon the erection of the Tuileries, having after her husband's death abandoned the Tournelles, when terrified by the predictions of her astrologers, who foretold that she would perish in some place bearing the name of Saint-Germain ; and the Tuileries unfortunately happening to be in the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois — for this idle reason only did she abandon the glorious edifice of her own construction, and at an infinitude of trouble, accompanied by prodigious outlays, required when her exhausted funds could

ill brook such wanton expenditure, together with the secularization of an Abbey and the overturning of a nunnery (*Les Filles Penitentes*) for which purposes she had to procure bulls from the Pope?—on this account alone, we say, did she proceed to cumber the ground with this huge structure—not a stone of which is now left standing with the exception of the column or observatory attached to its courts, toward which building we are shortly about to repair, and shall then more particularly describe. It may not, perhaps, be here altogether out of place to mention, as a sequel to the story, a circumstance which has been much dwelt upon by the supporters of judicial astrology, and which would almost seem to verify the prophecy of Nostradamus: that Catherine, notwithstanding all her precautions, eventually expired in the arms of *Saint-Germain Favyn*, Bishop of Nazareth, chief confessor to her son *Henri III*.

Our party now approached the grand portal, before which was arrayed a guard of some half dozen musketeers with their Ser-

geant at their head—the royal blazon upon their doublets glimmering in the moonlight—who placed their long musketoons in their rests and blew their lighted tow-matches as they drew nigh; while the Sergeant in a loud tone commanded a halt.

A brief parley ensued. But perceiving the Queen's glove displayed upon the cap of the Cavalier, the Sergeant immediately drew his men aside and suffered them to pass. The gate was unbarred at their summons, and as the porter somewhat slowly performed his office, the following exclamation from the Sergeant reached the ears of the Cavalier and his companions: “Ventre-bleu! Chopin—we have a strange night of it. We are set here to prevent Ruggieri's escape, and it seems as if he had called all the fiends in Tartarus to his aid. First comes that Mask and seeks admittance: we refuse him. Anon he comes again with a crew of varlets blacker than himself, demanding the deliverance of a player girl. Then, for a third time he appears, with the King's signet,

which we dare not disobey—and gains admission, with his comrades. Well! no sooner do we think we are rid of him, than, by Proteus! here he is again, with a couple of familiars in the shape of scholars, and a dog the like of which I never saw before. *Le Diable m'emporte!* if I can understand it. One thing is clear, he has got the Queen's licence, and so we must not say him nay, but he must have the devil's watch-word if he would return again, for, by *Holy Peter!* he comes not forth without a bullet to try the proof of his pourpoint.

Heard you not that?" whispered the Cavalier—"Our foe is beforehand with us. Not a moment is to be lost."

The porter started as he beheld the Mask, and involuntarily placed his hand before his eyes to ascertain whether or not his vision deceived him. He bowed, however, to the ground as he recognised the ensign of the Queen-Mother, and the next moment the party found themselves within the courtyard of the palace.

Before them stretched a smooth parterre, in the midst of which, bathed in the moonlight, glimmered a lovely statue of the Queen of Love, the workmanship of the famous sculptor Jean Goujon, the restorer of the art in his own country, and surnamed the Phidias of France, who perished, it is said, by the hands of Charles IX., at the Massacre of Saint-Barthelemy. But it was not to gaze on this miracle of art, that the Cavalier now paused. Neither was it to admire the gorgeous and illuminated windows of Catherine's embowered chapel—the then wonder of Paris—to listen to the choral hymn resounding from its shrines, and breaking the midnight stillness around them—nor to note the majestic towers of Saint-Eustache which commanded the spot whereon they stood. Pointing out a tall column which might be discerned spiring from out a grove that skirted an extensive esplanade, and indicating the path that led to it through the gardens of the palace, the Cavalier was about to quit his companions, when Ogilvy's quick

eye detected figures gliding at some distance from them amongst the trees. “They are yonder, by Saint Andrew!” exclaimed the Scot—“there is yet time.”

Scarcely had the words escaped him ere the Cavalier disappeared; and the two Scholars instantly commenced a pursuit of the figures they had descried. Druid regarded his master wistfully for a moment, but receiving a fresh command from him to that effect, put himself upon the tract of the Cavalier.

The doors of the Hôtel were opened to the Cavalier’s summons. Not a word was exchanged between him and the Ushers, from one of whom he received a torch. Alone he passed through a magnificent hall, the ceiling of which was decorated with exquisite frescoes — ascended a vast staircase of carved oak, and entered a long and glorious gallery crowded with trophies and panoplies collected by the chivalrous Henri II., and streaming with painted glass “blushing with blood of queens and kings.” This gallery he swiftly traversed, and finally reached a recess, within

which, as Catherine had informed him, were placed three bronze statues. Touching the spear of the central figure, it yielded to his pressure, disclosing a dark and tortuous passage, into which the Cavalier unhesitatingly plunged.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LABORATORY.

Ruggieri. C'est donc un nouvel horoscope que vous désirez, ma fille ? Si vous voulez monter avec moi à la tour, vos connaissances en astronomie sont assez grandes pour que vous puissiez suivre mes opérations et les comprendre.

Catherine. Non, Ruggieri, c'est vers la terre que mes yeux sont fixés maintenant.

A DUMAS. *Henri Trois.*

LEAVING the Cavalier to pursue his subterranean path alone, we will endeavour, in the meantime, to give the reader some idea of the scene that awaited his arrival in the laboratory of the Astrologer.

Let him picture to himself a high vaulted

chamber, cylindrical in shape, massive in construction, dungeon-like in aspect. Let him darken its gray granite walls with smoke—erect within it four pilasters, and decorate the fluted shafts of each with crowns, fleurs-de-lis, broken mirrors, horns of abundance and with the letters **C.** and **H.** interlaced and surrounded with love-knots; devices emblematic of the widowhood and queenly state of the builder of the turret. Let him next place within each subdivision of the wall, created by these pillars, talismanic effigies of superstitious import, and lest his fancy should not be wild or extravagant enough to supply sculptures sufficiently grotesque, we will endeavour to give some direction to his fancy. In the first compartment, then, let him imagine “a kingly and a crowned shape” seated astride upon an eagle; grasping in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a sceptre; while a female figure, beaked like the Ibis, holds to his gaze an enchanted mirror. Let him surround this group with hieroglyphics and cabalistic characters, and engrave be-

neath it the word *Hagiel* : the intelligence of Saturn. In the next compartment let him place another female shape of rare beauty, with dishevelled hair, grasping in the right hand a serpent, and in the left a singularly formed knife—let him encircle this medallion with Hebrew and Chaldaic sentences, and inscribe at the head *Redemel*—the spirit of Venus ; and at the feet *Asmodel*—one of the twelve angelic governors of the celestial signs. These talismans, esteemed of sovereign virtue, and of power to aid in the acquisition of mystical lore, were composed of divers metals, molten when the constellations presiding over the nativity of the Queen, by whose command they were fabricated, held sway ; and were soldered together with human gore, and the blood of goats. The third compartment was occupied by a group yet more fantastical. Here might be seen an altar of ivory, against which was placed a crimson cushion sustaining a huge crucifix of silver inclosing a lesser cross of ebony. On either side stood a Satyr wrought in bronze, each supporting his rugged

person with a club, and bearing upon his shoulder a vase of pure and shining crystal, containing certain unknown drugs. Within the fourth and last compartment some mystery was evidently shrouded beneath the close-drawn folds of a thick and gloomy curtain.

Ruggieri's laboratory would have been incomplete had it wanted that furnace, which in the jargon of Hermetic philosophy, would be termed the Keeper of Secrets, the producer of Immortal Fire, or Athanor. But it did *not* want this indispensable accompaniment to an Alchemist's study. Behold it!—in shape round, as directed by the formula of the science, capped and winged on either side with a thin tube, with door and window, brazen plate, mattress, and cucurbite complete. Upon the door this profane application of the sacred text had been made—“*Quærite, quærite et invenietis, pulsate et aperietur vobis.*” Around the square pane of the little window was traced the fol-

lowing enigmatical inscription, the solution of which we leave to the reader's ingenuity :—

Nunc dimittis Super fundamenta,
Fundamenta Super verba mea,
Verba mea Super diligam te,
Diligam te Super attendite.

Upon the tripod of Secrets within this philosophical Athanor was placed a gourd-shaped, bolt-headed glass vessel hermetically sealed, and filled with a red fluid, the label of which purported it to be *lac virginis*. Next to this stood another cucurbite, plunged *in balneo*, containing a specific prepared according to the recipes of Flamel, Artephius, Pontanus, and Zacharius for the cure of all astral diseases. Affixed to the copper vessel, denominated Saint Mary's Bath, in which this bolt-head was deposited, was the following inscription :—

Maria mira sonat
Quæ nobis talia donat
Gummis cum binis
Fugitivum fugit inimis

Horis in trinis,
Tria vinclat fortia finis
Filia Plutonis,
Consortia jungit amoris.

On the floor near to the furnace was strewn all the heterogeneous lumber proper to the retreat of an adept; to wit, earths, metals,

“ Vitriol, sal-tartar, argaile, alkali,”

gums, oils, retorts, alembics, “ crosslets, crucibles and cucurbites.” Nor must we omit a slab of black marble, on which were deposited certain drugs and small phials, together with a vizard of glass, a circumstance sufficiently attesting the subtle and deadly nature of the tinctures sometimes extracted by the inmate of the chamber.

At a table, quaint and grotesque in its character as the rest of the furniture of the apartment, lighted by the dull red flame of a silver lamp, furnished with an hour-glass and a scull, with a mystical scroll stretched out before him, and apparently buried in deep calculations in a high-backed oaken chair, wrought with the same bizarre devices

as the table, sat an old man in a black velvet garb with flowing sleeves—whose livid countenance and bald furrowed brow, clothed with a velvet scull-cap, proclaimed him the presiding influence of this weird abode, the adept astrologer and sorcerer, Ruggieri. Beside the magician sat another stately figure, in whose haughty, imperious demeanour and proud brow the reader, we apprehend, will have no difficulty in recognising the Queen-Mother. Catherine's, indeed, was a physiognomy not easily to be forgotten.

Even such a forehead did the Medici
Of Florence boast.*

Underneath the table, and almost appearing with his broad, hunched shoulders to lend it support, glared the dwarf Elberich ; his red luminous eyes sparkling like phosphoric coruscations in the gloom. Nothing of the mannikin's swart and shapeless figure could be discerned in the obscurity, beyond the outline, which resembled that of a grisly bear. But his hand seemed to grasp the

* Ben Jonson.

wheel of some hidden machinery, serving to raise a trap-door, carefully contrived within the floor of the turret. At the dwarf's feet was rolled, what appeared to be a small black cat, of the civet species: an animal held in great request by the ancient necromancers, for the confection of various charms: a certain pebble lodged beneath its tongue being supposed to confer the gift of vaticination.

Suddenly a sharp musical ring was heard vibrating in the air like the sound produced by a glass vessel accidentally stricken. The Queen-Mother raised her eyes and fixed them upon a curiously-contrived astrological instrument placed on a stand in her immediate vicinity. Framed according to the instructions delivered by the star-wise seers of antiquity, this machine represented seven figures — symbolical of the planets (whom Mercurius Trismegistus calls the Seven Governors of the World) wrought with infinite labour and cost when each archetypal orb was in ascendance, of the most precious stones, earths, and

metals, supposed to be under its especial influence. The figure upon which Catherine's gaze now turned was that of an armed man of ruddiest brass, mounted upon a lion of the same metal, grasping in his right hand a naked sword, and in his left a trunkless head carved in a blood stone. Upon the helm of this martial image flamed a beryl ; and in its slow ascent, the weapon within its grasp coming in contact with a bell-shaped glass above it, had given the alarm we have mentioned.

“ The Mask comes not,” exclaimed Catherine, regarding the image with some dismay. “ Bright Jove hath no more dominion, we are now under the rule of fiery Mavors — a planet of malignant aspect towards us.”

“ True my daughter,” returned the Astrologer. “ And see the red orb ascends within the second face of Aries. Would he had arrived ere this conjunction had occurred ! Our scheme will scarcely prosper.”

“ Say not so, father,” replied Catherine

confidently : “ If Crichton perish we shall have achieved much towards its accomplishment. And when did thy tinctures, or Maurevert’s poignard fail us ? ”

“ If the blow be dealt, or the potion swallowed, never, my daughter, but—”

“ But what, father ? — Why these misgivings ? ”

“ The heavenly configurations presage danger to this Scot, not death,” answered the Astrologer, gravely. “ For, though in his horoscope the Giver of Life meets with the Interficient at this hour ; though the Lord of the Fourth House is in conjunction with the Lord of the Ascendant in Aries, within the orbs of a square of Saturn ; and Capricorn descends upon the cusp of the Eighth ; yet there are other strong and countervailing signs.—He may escape us, daughter.”

“ Ha ! ” exclaimed Catherine.

“ Methinks I see his star still shining in the heavens,” continued Ruggieri : “ Majestic and serene it traverses the skies. A halo

of glory surrounds it. Malignant and cross aspects dart their baneful rays athwart its track. In vain they scowl. It still pursues its course in splendor undisturbed."

" Doth thine art tell thee this ?" demanded Catherine, impatiently.

" My silent and unerring counsellors thus admonish me, my daughter," replied the Astrologer. " I am but their interpreter."

" Say on, then," continued Catherine coldly.

" The star hath become a meteor," returned Ruggieri. " Its lustre is blinding."

" What more ?"

" I gaze again. The heavens are void and dark : the meteor that dazzled me has sunk—the star of Crichton set for ever."

" And when will this occur ?—"

" Ere a lustre shall have elapsed, my daughter."

" So long ! and how will his doom be accomplished ? "

" The sign is fiery, and Saturn the afflicting

planet," returned the Astrologer. "Within his leaden sphere Hylech is cadent. The Native will perish by the edge of the sword."

"And if thy unerring counsellors tell thee thus much concerning the Scot, what import do they bring touching thine own fate?"

"Shall I erect a scheme, my daughter?"

"It were needless," returned the Queen-Mother, sternly, "I will read it for thee. Thy destiny is linked with that of Crichton: or he or thou wilt perish. If he survive the night, the stake will be thy portion on the morrow; I will not stretch forth my hand, as heretofore, to redeem thee from the wheel."

"My gracious Mistress!—"

"If the heavenly influences fail thee, wrest aid from darker powers. Summon to thy assistance by potent spells, such as thou boastest to have won from thy magical lore, a demon, like that which served the wise Cardan; and bid him smite thine enemy. For, by my soul, if Crichton live to annihilate my projects, thy ashes shall be strewed by the winds over the Place de Grève, ere

night once again draw her veil over this city!"

"The gnome who served the wise physician you have named," replied Ruggieri, firmly, "had not power over life. *Jerôme Cardan* could foresee, but not avert; and yet he was well versed in the language of the stars. When he foretold that your august spouse, *Henri II.*, was menaced with a fearful and sudden death, he could not unfold the means of its avoidance; neither could his art turn aside the fatal lance of *Montgomery*. The end of the illustrious Monarch was decreed on high. And when my long communing with the celestial intelligences informs me that your own great career will close within the limits of *Saint-Germain*, I can do no more than point to the term of destiny. It is not enough, that your Majesty has abandoned the *Tournelles* and *Tuileries*; nor that you abstain from setting foot within the district bearing that name; your destiny will infallibly be accomplished, despite your precautions. I have promised you length of days, power, and do-

minion ; and my prognostications will be fulfilled. But the means of their fulfilment rests with myself. I have shown you how your dominion may be maintained, your power extended, and by what means length of days may be ensured. If I perish, your honours, your rule, your sway over the king, your power will depart from you and moulder like a worm-eaten truncheon into dust. Deliver me to my enemies, and ere a week have elapsed, I predict that Louise de Vaudemont will have absolute sway over her husband's affections, Joyeuse will be in power, the League destroyed, Guise and his partizans, who indirectly aid your schemes, crushed, Henri of Navarre and the Huguenots will regain their strength in Paris, and your Majesty will be without a party, and perchance in exile with your son the Duc D'Anjou. These results, which I foresee, my skill enables me to avert; and when my dust whitens the pavement of the Place de Grève, and your foes exult in your downfall, you will then call to mind my warning."

Catherine uttered a single exclamation of displeasure, but she offered no interruption to the Astrologer.

“To summon a spirit of darkness were matter of little difficulty,” continued Ruggieri, who had entirely regained his confidence, “to him who possesses the treasured hieroglyphics of Nicholas Flamel—who can draw the names of the evil angels from Holy Writ, as did the learned Hebrew Mecubals—who can search the ancient Chaldean sages for a genius in the rays of Sol or Luna—who understands the characters and seals of spirits, the kingly writing of the Malachim, that which is termed by the soothsayers of the east ‘the passing of the river,’ and the Notariacon of the Cabalists. But a spirit invoked without due preparation, like the extraction of yon Athanor of the argent-vif, in which strange colours, called out of season, endanger the magisterium, may, in lieu of assistance, bring destruction. Nevertheless, if your Majesty desires it, I will prepare to raise a phantasm, proceeding ac-

cording to the directions of Apollonius, Triphonius, Albertus, and Raimundus Lullius, and shall make use of the signs given by the wise Porphyrius in his occult treatise *De Responsis.*"

"I do not desire such evidence of thy skill," returned Catherine, coldly.—"Choose some more convenient season for thy consultations with the powers of darkness. I would not have my soul placed in jeopardy by such unhallowed intercourse. But if thou hast, in truth, a familiar spirit who serves thee, he should have guarded thee against thine enemy. Crichton should never have found entrance here."

"Crichton obtained admittance by stratagem, gracious Madame. I was at the moment engaged in tending the wounds of the Gelosa, and Elberich for the first time neglected his trust. The daring Scot had seized the image and the scroll ere I could prevent him, or destroy them.

"And by his acquaintance with the character of that scroll, he is aware of this

Mask's connection with our plot--of the part which he was destined to play in aiding our son, the Duc D'Anjou, to the throne of his brother Henri—all this thou hadst set down in thy accursed document."

"It were vain to attempt to disguise my inadvertence from your Majesty—I had done so."

"And by consequence he is acquainted with the name and rank of this Mask."

"Unquestionably, Madame."

"And does my name—mark me, Ruggieri—answer, and equivocate not,—does *my* name, we say, appear in connection with that of the Duc D'Anjou in the plot for Henri's dethronement?"

"No, Madame," returned Ruggieri, boldly.

"Art thou sure of this?"

"As of my existence."

"Cosmo Ruggieri, thou hast sealed thine own fate."

"How, Madame?"

"The King requires a victim. We must make a virtue of necessity. Justice must take its course upon the morrow."

“ And your Majesty will surrender me to the Chambre Ardente ? ”

“ If Henri demand it I cannot offer resistance.”

“ Have you reflected on the consequences of such a step ? ” returned Ruggieri, with sullen audacity.

“ The consequences—ha ! ”

“ The Question may enforce strange truths from me.”

“ Who will credit an accusation from *thee*—and against *me*—if written proof exist not.”

The furrows upon Ruggieri’s sallow brow were wrinkled into a bitter smile.

“ But if written proof *should* exist, Madame—if I can produce your own despatches—subscribed with your proper hand—sealed with your proper signet ? ”

“ Jesus ! ”

“ If I can exhibit your own confessions that you have poisoned two of your sons, and are now conspiring to dethrone a third—what appearance will the charge assume then, Madame ? ”

“ Hast thou not destroyed my letters ? ”

demanded Catherine, trembling with wrath—
“ but no—no—’tis false—thou triflest with
me.”

“ Behold them ! ” cried Ruggieri, drawing a
packet from his bosom—“ Behold this missal
—with the Duc D’Anjou’s letter to your high-
ness on the first leaf.”

“ Traitor ! ” exclaimed Cathertne, “ thou hast
preserved those papers to betray me ! ”

“ No, Madame,” replied Ruggieri, “ I have
preserved them to protect myself. I have
served your Majesty faithfully. I have be-
trayed no trust confided in me ; and the rack
shall tear me limb from limb ere it shall
wrest word from me to your dishonour.
Deliver me to Henri’s tribunal. Surrender
me to the Chambre Ardente—and do so
fearlessly. Here are your papers.”

“ I was indeed mistaken in thee, Ruggieri.
While aught of power remains to me, not a
hair of thy head shall be injured.”

“ I have ever found you a noble and a
generous mistress,” replied the crafty Astro-
loger, respectfully kissing the hand which
Catherine extended to him.

“ Commit this packet to the flames, my loyal servant,” said Catherine, “ it might fall into other and less loyal hands than thine.”

“ Before I do so, will it please your Majesty to examine its contents ? ” returned Ruggieri.—“ There are certain papers which you may not choose to have destroyed.”

“ I know of nothing I should care to preserve,” said Catherine, musing. “ Speak if there be aught I call not to mind, good father.”

“ Amongst other matters, that packet contains the proof of the Demoiselle Esclairmonde’s illustrious birth, which may be needful, should your Majesty ever use her as a hostage for the fidelity of the Protestant party—”

“ True—true,” replied Catherine, “ give them to me—these proofs are needed now. I observed to night, that the King looked with eyes of devotion upon the Demoiselle. Thy enchantments have wrought upon him in a quarter where ’twas least expected. I must caution him against further advances.”

“ Ahreman grant your caution come not too late, Madame,” said Ruggieri ; “ his Majesty is greatly enamoured ; and he hath a rival moreover to give a spur to his passion.”

“ A rival ! ” exclaimed the Queen-Mother, “ who has dared to approach our protégée in the character of a lover ? ”

“ He who dares every thing.”

“ Thou canst not allude to Crichton ? — ”

“ I have his Majesty’s assurance that the accursed Scot is her favoured suitor,” returned Ruggieri.

“ Insolent ! ” exclaimed Catherine ; “ and yet I might have guessed as much from Marguerite’s vindictive ravings, with which I thought Esclairmonde’s name was strangely coupled.”

“ His Majesty has no doubt carried his design into execution, and roused the suspicions of the Queen of Navarre,” returned the Astrologer ; “ he threatened as much in my hearing.”

“ Doubtless he hath done so,” answered Catherine ; “ and if jealousy befriend us with

Marguerite, little more is to be feared from Crichton. On that score we need entertain no further apprehension. Thy phial was entrusted to her—”

“To Marguerite!” exclaimed Ruggieri, uneasily.

“Upon a solemn pledge, which she dares not disobey. Be tranquil. Crichton will trouble us no more.”

“A woman’s will may waver,” muttered Ruggieri—“of all your sex, your Majesty is the only one I have met with, possessing firmness of purpose.”

At this instant a sound was heard within the wall of the apartment, as if a key turned within the wards of the lock.

“He comes!” ejaculated Catherine joyfully—“all is well.”

And the next moment a door, so carefully concealed within the masonry of the turret as to be wholly indistinguishable, was thrown open, and the masked cavalier stood before them. A huge dog followed at his heels.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INCANTATION.

Voulez-vous en être convaincu tout à l'heure (reprit le Comte) sans tant de façons? Je m'en vas faire venir les Sylphes de Cardan, vous entendrez de leur propre bouche ce qu'ils sont, et ce que je vous en ay appris.—

LE COMTE DE GABALIS. *Quatrième Entretien.*

A COURTEOUS greeting passed between the Cavalier and the Queen-Mother. But unequivocal symptoms of dissatisfaction were exhibited by the dwarf and his feline companion at Druid's intrusion into their domain. Bristling, spitting, and erecting her back, the cat, like an enraged virago, seemed prepared to attack the stranger with

tooth and talon, while the dwarf, no less offended, searched about for some more formidable weapon of offence. Druid, however, taking up his position at the feet of his new master, treated these hostile demonstrations with disdain and indifference, keeping his glowing eyes fixed upon the movements of the Astrologer, in whom he appeared to recognise an enemy.

Catherine's first enquiries from the Cavalier were, whether he had been present at the royal supper ; and receiving a reply in the affirmative, she continued her interrogations —“ and your adversary was there likewise,” asked she, “ was he not ?”

“ He was, Madame,” answered the Mask.

“ Did he occupy the seat wont to be reserved for him ?” demanded Catherine, eagerly.

“ The Chevalier Crichton was placed next to the Queen of Navarre,” returned the Mask.

“ And she—she pledged him —did you observe so much, monseigneur ?”

“ I saw the wine poured out. I heard the queen, your daughter’s whispered pledge. Crichton raised the cup to his lips—”

“ The Virgin be praised!” exclaimed Catherine, triumphantly — “ that draught has rendered him immortal. Ruggieri, the stars have deceived thee. Thine horoscope was false. Thy potion hath been swallowed. Our enemy is removed. You are right welcome, monsignore. You bring us glad tidings. We promised you you should learn more of Crichton’s fate when you came hither. That cup—”

“ Was poisoned,” rejoined the Mask. “ I know it, Madame.”

“ Was its effect so sudden?—Is he, then, dead?”

“ He lives.”

“ Ha !”

“ A jewel within his ring gave him timely warning of his danger. The deadly potion passed not his lips.”

“ Confusion!” exclaimed Catherine. “ But

though the poison has failed, twenty poignards invest the Louvre. He cannot avoid them all."

"Crichton *has* quitted the Louvre, and is yet in safety," returned the Cavalier. "He *has* baffled the vigilance of your spies."

"Mine horoscope deceived me not, you find, my daughter," said Ruggieri, who despite the ill-success of their schemes could not repress his exultation at this supposed testimony to his astrological skill.

"Peace!" cried the Queen-Mother — "When I requested your attendance here, monseigneur, it was to confer on matters of more moment than this Scot's escape, and I crave your pardon if I dwell too much upon it. I am not accustomed to defeat. Mother of Heaven! it would not now surprise me if this minion of fortune, deeming himself invincible, and puffed up by his success, should adventure hither and attempt the rescue of the Gelosa—as he vaunted he would do, in the presence of our son's assembled court. Heaven grant he may

carry his boast into execution. But no, even *his* audacity hath its limits."

"Your desires may be gratified, Madame. Crichton, I doubt not, will fulfil his word—"

"To night?"

"To night. Are you sure he is not here already?"

"Monseigneur!"

"Nay, Madame, the question is not irrelevant. He is aware of your appointment with myself; he quitted the Louvre in a disguise in all respects like my own; he has escaped your guard; he has vowed to attempt the Gelosa's rescue—why should not I look for him here?"

"You forget, monseigneur that you alone possess our glove. Your enemy may have the same masquerade attire in all respects; but without that passport he could not gain entrance to our palace."

"My enemy possesses the King's signet, Madame," returned the Mask—"which even *your* guard must respect."

“ This is news indeed,” returned Catherine “ Ruggieri, who waits without? What men-at-arms do we number? Who waits, I say, below?”

“ Some half-dozen trusty blades, with a Spaniard, and a son of Anak, whom I have taken this night into your Majesty’s service; varlets who fear not to use the stiletto; and who have, moreover, a wrong to revenge upon this Scot, being somewhat students of the University of Paris.”

“ Enough. Summon them to our presence.”

Ruggieri stamped upon the floor.

“ Madame,” said the Mask sternly, “ I am accustomed to meet my adversaries in the field—sword to sword. I cannot sit by and see assassination done.”

“ Assassination!” laughed Catherine derisively; “ that phrase suits not with the justice of a Queen.—What ho! Ruggieri, come they not?”

The words had scarcely escaped her lips, when several dark figures ascended from the

trap-door, the bolts of which were withdrawn by the dwarf; and arranged themselves in silence before the Queen. Amongst them were the reader's acquaintances, the Spanish student Caravaja, and the giant Loupgarou. These desperadoes appeared to be now in their native element; and their fierce and reckless countenances well assorted with the nature of the occupation for which they were destined.

“Get behind yon carvings,” said Catherine, motioning to the darkling group; “yet stay—let him who has the surest dagger remain behind.”

“I claim that honour,” said Caravaja; “my dagger hath never failed me.”

“Let thy blow be dealt with more certainty than his, who this morn aimed at the same breast—that of the Chevalier Crichton.”

“Por l’alma de mi madre!” ejaculated the Spaniard; “is it the accursed Scot whom your Majesty—?”

“Ha! dost parley with us, knave? Take

thy place above the trap-door—Strike as he ascends."

Caravaja drew his dagger, and assumed the position indicated by the Queen,

"He will not escape us now, methinks," exclaimed Catherine triumphantly.

"Is it possible, Madame, you can witness this slaughterous deed unmoved?"

"You shall yourself witness our calmness. You know us not, monseigneur."

"I hear a footstep," exclaimed Ruggieri; "he comes."

"Art ready?" asked the Queen of the Spaniard.

"My dagger thirsts for his blood," returned Caravaja; "I see the waving of a domino within the vaulted passage below; it is a masked figure, your Majesty—not Crichton."

"Be silent, fool, 'tis he."

"Madame," exclaimed the Mask, firmly, "this must not be. No assassin's blow shall be struck while I stand by."

"Would you assist your enemy?" said

Catherine scornfully : “ An Italian and forgive ! ”

“ I do not ask Crichton’s life of your Majesty. I see well you are relentless. I entreat you only to delay the stroke till you have confronted him with me. Seize him and stay his speech. But strike him not till I withdraw my mask.”

A terrible smile played upon Catherine’s features.

“ Though you begged this boon upon your bended knee,” said she ; “ though my own soul were set upon the issue, I would not delay my vengeance one second. Are you answered, monseigneur.”

“ I am,” replied the Cavalier, sternly laying his hand upon his sword.

A profound silence ensued. Not a breath was drawn. There was something so appalling in this momently-anticipated murder that the hearts of the spectators grew chill, and even Ruggieri’s livid cheek took a more ghastly hue. Catherine alone was superior to this weakness of humanity.

Her countenance was lighted with a glance of triumph—and she listened intently for the approaching footsteps. The sounds drew nearer, and the points of a sable feather could now be discovered, emerging from the trap-door.

Catherine motioned to Caravaja. The latter raised his dagger and drew back to give more certainty to his stroke. The new-comer slowly ascended, uttering an exclamation as his eye rested upon the Queen and her companions.

At this moment the Spaniard's weapon gleamed in the lamp-light. But he struck not—his arm was disabled and pinioned by the teeth of Druid, and his poignard rolled upon the floor. The new-comer, whose attire and mask in all respects resembled that of the sable Cavalier, started and looked round irresolutely.

“Hence!” exclaimed the Cavalier, “your plans are foiled—your stratagem is discovered—your life endangered—hence!”

“ My followers are within hearing,” returned the Mask, raising the call to his lips.

But ere sound could be emitted, the trap-door closed with a horrid clangor beneath his feet: the machinery having been suddenly turned, and the bolts shot into their sockets by the dwarf.

Catherine arose and fixed her piercing eyes upon the Cavalier.

“ A moment ago I told you, Monseigneur, that you knew me not. Take heed you purchase not that knowledge somewhat too dearly. I forgive this indiscretion on the score of your youth. But beware how you incur my displeasure a second time. The proverb would tell you that the offender writes in sand —the offended in marble. My wrong is engraven in adamant.—This man hath defied me, and by my father’s head, he shall die the death.”

“ What am I to understand from this, Madame ? ” inquired the Mask, in a voice so exactly resembling that of the Cavalier, that

the nicest ear could not detect a shade of difference in the intonation, and even Catherine started at the sound.

“ Now, by our Lady of good Succour ! ” cried the Queen, addressing the Cavalier, “ were I not assured of your identity, Signore, I should almost doubt the evidence of my senses. The delusion is wonderful.”

“ No delusion is practised on my part,” returned the Mask haughtily. “ Your Majesty is the dupe of other artifice.”

“ You bear yourself boldly, messire,” returned Catherine, “ but your confidence will not long avail you. Tear off his mask ! ”

At this command of the Queen, the men-at-arms, headed by Loupgarou, sprang from their concealment.

“ Ha ! —San Longino to the rescue ! —off ! ” cried the Mask fiercely, putting himself in a posture of defence. “ He dies, who first advances.

“ Soh ! —you refuse to remove your vizard,” said the Queen, “ you are self-convicted, messire.”

“To you, Madame, I should not hesitate to reveal my features,” replied the Mask. But before these rude assailants—never. You forget to whom you offer this indignity.”

“By my soul, no—I forget it not,” returned Catherine, scornfully; “I offer it to one who hath openly defied my power—who threatened to snatch a captive maiden from my grasp, and who volunteered his own head as the price of his failure. He *has* failed, and think not I will omit the penalty.”

“Those were Crichton’s words, Madame.”

“And Crichton’s are the features I would unmask.”

“Then let your attendants tear off *his* vizard who stands beside you.”

“Insolent!” exclaimed the Queen, “I trifle—upon him, varlets—strike first—I shall have leisure to peruse his lineaments afterwards.”

“Hold, miscreants,” cried the Cavalier, drawing his sword and placing himself between the Mask and the assailants—“hold or—”

“Your blood be upon your own head,”

ejaculated Catherine, impatiently. — “ I have already warned you.”

“ On one condition, Madame, will I sheathe my sword,” said the Cavalier.

“ If that condition be the life of Crichton, you will in vain propose it,” returned Catherine.

“ I do not ask Crichton’s life,” rejoined the Cavalier—“ I ask you only to defer your vengeance. Grant me a few minutes’ conference with your Majesty, and let the withdrawal of my mask be the signal to your executioners to assail their victim.”

“ Be it so,” replied Catherine.

“ And at a gesture from the Queen, ere he could offer any effectual resistance, the Mask was disarmed and secured by Loupgarou and his crew, and his arms bound together by the leathern girdle of one of the men-at-arms. Caravaja by this time, not without the loss of much of his raiment and somewhat of his skin, had liberated himself from Druid’s teeth, and muttering deep execrations, retired crest-fallen amongst his comrades

“ Por la oreja sagrada de Malchos ! ” growled he to Loupgarou--“ that hound must certainly be a wizard ! I may say, with old Cornelius Agrippa ‘ *abi, perdita bestia, quæ me totum perdidisti.* ’ ”

“ Hear me, Madame ! ” exclaimed the Mask, furiously, as soon as his choler allowed him utterance. “ I repeat you are the dupe of artifice.—Let both wizards be removed, and you will then judge between us.”

“ I shall exercise my own pleasure upon that head, Messire,” returned Catherine — “ away with him, varlets, to the guard-room. —See that the doors are barred against his followers ; and if rescue be attempted, tarry not for further orders.”

“ We understand your Majesty,” replied Loupgarou, in a hoarse tone, inclining his enormous person towards the Queen in such manner as a tall cedar might be bent by the desert blast towards some tree of meaner growth— the giant, we may remark, had been incontinently chosen (such is the reverence in which brute force and stature are held by the

vulgar) to the command of this bravo troop.—“Have you any further commands, Madame?” asked the Titan, with a second obeisance.

The Cavalier again interposed.

“Your Majesty will, I trust,” said he, “issue your commands, that your captive be treated with the courtesy and respect to which his condition as a loyal and honourable Cavalier entitles him. I have your promise that he shall receive no injury till I withdraw my mask. But I will rather remove it now, and bring his fate to an instant issue, than expose a noble gentleman to the debasing taunts of a felon band like this; whose insults, were I in his place, it would be more difficult to brook than their daggers’ points.”

“I see not wherefore I should respect *his* honour who regarded not *mine*, Signore,” returned Catherine, sarcastically. “But be it as you desire. Remove the captive,” continued she, addressing Loupgarou. “Treat him with all consideration consistent with his safe custody. It were well if he bestowed the

few minutes of grace left him, in preparation for the eternity he will so soon encounter. Look to him well—the lives of all shall answer for his life."

"Madame!" said the Mask, sternly, "you are deceived."

"Away!" cried the Queen.

And without allowing him time for further speech, the Mask was hurried down the trap-door, and the iron valve instantly closed over him.

The dwarf expressed his satisfaction at his disappearance by a multitude of elfin gambols. Catherine clapped her hands — her custom when greatly pleased—and turning to the Cavalier, said with a benignant smile, "We will now come to the subject nearest your heart, Signore, and speak of her whose deliverance this luckless Crichton was to have effected—the Gelosa. You may desire to behold her."

"I came hither to that end, Madame," replied the Cavalier.

The Queen motioned to Ruggieri. Followed

by the dwarf, the Astrologer withdrew to that side of the chamber against which the curtains were drawn, and busied himself in describing certain lines with his Jacob's staff upon the floor ; while his companion proceeded to set fire to various spicy woods in a brasier, in which, from time to time, he cast other odoriferous ingredients, presently filling the chamber with a cloud of vapour.

“Hath a magical ceremonial to be performed previously to her appearance ?” asked the Cavalier, in a tone of impatience.

“Said I not there was sorcery in the case ?” returned Ruggieri—“The girl is under the dominion of invisible but powerful essences, over whom these spells have control. You shall not only behold her in person, but learn by what charms she has so long held your soul in subjection.”

“It needs no conjuration to discover the nature of those allurements,” returned the Cavalier, impatiently. “She whose eyes shame the star Aldebaran in lustre, and whose form rivals that of the sylph Agla in lightness,

need not resort to enchantment to hold her lover's heart in thraldom. I can divine whence her fascination arises without thine aid, good father."

"Can you likewise divine whence arises her repugnance towards your suit, Monsignore? Can you tell by what power she is enabled to resist your passionate suit?"

"By that power, over which no art or enticement, human or superhuman, can prevail—that of virtue," returned the Cavalier.

"Bah!" exclaimed Ruggieri, scornfully shrugging his shoulders—"the honour of man and the faith of woman, like trinkets used to decorate apparel, are excellent embellishments to discourse, but of little real utility to the possessor. I understand not the advantage of such ornamental qualities—and have no strong belief in their existence. Virtue, however, has little to do with this girl's repugnance to you. She prefers another; and has been, moreover, in possession of a charm which, as I told you, I removed this morning from her neck. Take

this key, Monsignore, I have plunged it in a collyrium of such efficacy, that it cannot fail to draw her love towards him who wears it. Her heart will no longer dwell upon Crichton, but upon you."

The Cavalier took the key and examined its curious workmanship attentively. The Astrologer withdrew to continue his mysterious rites.

"While Ruggieri is occupied with his suffumigations," said Catherine, assuming a confidential tone; "you shall learn the secret I have to disclose to you—a secret which, as I have already observed, nearly concerns yourself."

A secret which concerns *me*, Madame!" said the Cavalier, whose eye was still fixed upon the golden key he held: "Does it relate in any way to the Gelosa?"

"By our Lady!" exclaimed Catherine, scornfully, "Ruggieri was not far from the truth, when he said you were bewitched by this girl. Your thoughts run on nought else. But do you imagine, fair Sir, I am equally

the subject of her fascinations, that I should trouble myself with the affairs of an actress?"

"Your pardon, Madame. I thought you had made some discovery touching the condition of this girl. There is an inscription graven upon this key, from which I gather somewhat of her history."

"Indeed!" said Catherine, "what imports it?"

"That she is the daughter of a dame of Mantua. Her name is Ginevra."

"How learn you this, monsignore?" asked the Astrologer, anxiously returning towards him.

"From the handle of this key, upon which these characters, revealed by the powerful acid thou hast applied, have become apparent — 'Ginevra, daughter of Ginevra Malatesta—Mantua.' "

"Taphthararath!" exclaimed the Astrologer, shaking as if a vision passed before him.

"What ails you, father!" enquired the Queen.

“ Nothing, Madame—nothing,” stammered Ruggieri, desirous, it would seem, to conceal the interest he took in the Cavalier’s discovery; “ but there is more, is there not, noble Signore? Give me that key—why did I part with it from mine own keeping?”

“ Of what avail had it been to thee,” said Catherine scornfully; “ thy boasted art could not enable thee then to detect those hidden characters. But what mean those mystic letters, and that figure? Can you unravel this further mystery, monseigneur?”

“ The figure is that of the planet Saturn, under whose dominion the metal of which this key is wrought, is placed by the disciples of occult philosophy. The letters are cabalistic characters, referring by numbers to those of the Hebrew alphabet; and forming, when placed together, a legend in that tongue, which may be thus interpreted:—

Gold! who wert a father’s bane,
Gold! who wert a mother’s stain,
Gold! be thou a daughter’s chain
Of purity.

Shield her breast from sword and fire,
From intemperate desire ;
From a heaven-abandon'd sire,
In charity ! ”

“ A singular inscription ! ” exclaimed Catherine ; “ and by our faith, monseigneur, you have shown no little ingenuity in its elucidation. I question whether our captive Crichton, who is said to be as well versed in the mysteries of Cabala as Pico di Mirandola, could have rendered it more felicitously. But love is quick-sighted.”

“ Suffer me to behold that inscription, monsignore,” said Ruggieri, trembling with agitation. “ I would fain examine those characters with mine own eyes.”

“ Not now—not now, good father,” interrupted Catherine, peremptorily : “ this bauble has already offered too much interruption to our conference. What matters it to thee who was the sire, or who the mother of this girl ? ”

“ Everything ! ” exclaimed the Astrologer, eagerly ; but, correcting himself, he added—

" that is, my charm would be more perfect if I possessed that talisman."

" 'Tis plain thou didst not understand its use or virtue," returned the Queen.—" To thy task without more delay."

And Ruggieri, seeing opposition was useless, slowly withdrew, casting a lingering, longing glance upon the amulet which he had so heedlessly abandoned to another, and which (now that he had parted with it) appeared to assume infinitely more importance in his eyes, than it had done while it continued in his own possession.

" Your Majesty had a disclosure to make to me?" said the Cavalier, as soon as the Astrologer had retired—" may I venture to recal your attention to the subject?"

" I have a secret to communicate, not less singular than that you have just chanced upon," said the Queen: " but before I unfold *my* mystery, I must inquire from you whether, amongst the beauties who thronged the Louvre to night, you noticed one who held the chief place among our dames of

honour, and who was for some time the favoured object of the King our son's regard?"

"Your Majesty cannot mean the Demoiselle Esclairmonde?" returned the Cavalier, starting. "Is it possible your communications can have reference to her?"

"My disclosure *has* reference to Esclairmonde, monseigneur," rejoined the Queen—"you have heard, perhaps, that there is a mystery attached to her birth."

"I have heard, Madame, the court rumour, which runs that she is an orphan, the daughter of a Huguenot family of distinction, but that her real name is carefully concealed, even from her own knowledge, by your commands."

"The tale whispered abroad by my orders has reached your ears, we find," replied Catherine; "nor is it altogether wide of the truth. She *is* the daughter of a Huguenot leader. But that leader was Louis I. de Bourbon, Prince de Condé."

For a moment the Cavalier appeared to be

lost in astonishment. Uttering a single exclamation of surprise, he maintained a perfect silence, as if overwhelmed by the Queen's intelligence. Catherine regarded him fixedly.

"My news, I perceive," said she, "excites your admiration. You deemed not, that, in my unknown attendant, Esclairmonde, you beheld the daughter of a house illustrious as your own."

"I am indeed filled with wonder, Madame," faltered the Cavalier--"Esclairmonde a Princess of Condé!—can it be?"

"Look at those papers which authenticate her birth," returned Catherine, placing the packet, given to her by Ruggieri, before the Cavalier. "Read that despatch from Tavannes, the captor of the infant Princess—read those instructions from the Cardinal of Lorraine—that memorial of the guard who seized her—this credential of her attendant, and our own letters of authority written at the period. Let your own eye glance over these documents, and you will

at once satisfy yourself of the truth of what I have asserted."

With a hand that trembled with eagerness, the Cavalier took the packet. His eye wandered rapidly over its contents. "I am satisfied, Madame," replied he, as his hasty scrutiny concluded. "And the secret of Esclairmonde's birth is, of course, wholly unknown to the Prince her brother?"

"Henri de Bourbon believes that his sister perished in her infancy," returned the Queen. "I will briefly relate to you how she fell into my hands, and you will then perceive his grounds for that supposition. During Louis de Bourbon's flight from Noyers to Rochelle, an ambuscade, placed by my directions in the mountain passes near Sancerre, for the purpose of intercepting the fugitives, surprised and attacked the litter in which the Princess and her infant charge were conveyed. By miracle she and her son escaped. But a fair child—a babe—scarce weaned, was borne off in triumph by the assailants. Condé, at the head of his Ritters, vainly sought to recoyer

his treasure. His efforts were so desperate, that a stratagem was resorted to, to baffle his fury. A child, snatched from one of his household, was hurled beneath his horse's feet, and deceived by the outcries of his opponents—thinking that he had unwittingly contributed to the destruction of his own offspring—the Prince, in despair, directed his attention to the preservation of his distracted consort, with whom, and with his son, he succeeded in effecting a secure retreat. From that day to the hour when his blood dyed the battle-field of Jarnac, Condé continued in ignorance of his child's existence. She was to him as she had been no more."

A deep sigh burst from the Cavalier's breast as Catherine paused for a moment to ascertain the impression she had produced. Apparently satisfied, she proceeded with her narrative.

"A month after the event I have described," continued the Queen, "a fair-

haired infant was brought to me at the Louvre by a faithful emissary of Tavannes. ‘The fawn is netted,’ wrote the Maréchal in the letter now lying before you, ‘the deer hath escaped our toils.’ By the advice of the Cardinal of Lorraine, the wisest and most prescient of counsellors, the Princess was reared in entire seclusion, and in ignorance of her rank—and by the Cardinal’s advice also, the motives of which you will find there developed, she was secretly suffered to imbibe the Calvinistic principles of her family. Of late, in order the more effectually to mask my designs, I have given it out that I intend her for the cloister, and I have noted with satisfaction the effect which this announcement of my will has produced upon her. The period which the sage Cardinal foresaw is arrived. Anjou’s plot is ripe. The Huguenots must be gained. With Esclairmonde, I have the means of winning over their leader. With her I have an earnest of Condé’s fidelity

should he league his arms with mine—with her I can paralyse his efforts should he declare against me."

"A refined and subtle scheme, Madame," replied the Cavalier, who had with difficulty repressed his indignation during the latter part of the Queen's recital, and whose vizard alone prevented the wrathful expression of his countenance from being perceived, "and worthy of a disciple of Nicolo Macchiavelli, such as the Cardinal of Lorraine was known to be. But may I venture to ask whether you now propose to restore the Princess to her brother?—And, furthermore, what may be your Majesty's motive in making me the depositary of so important a state secret as the mystery of her birth?"

"Your questions are somewhat abrupt, Signore;" replied Catherine with a slight expression of displeasure; "nevertheless I will answer them as freely as they are put. Your alliance with Anjou, your devotion towards myself, entitle you to our confidence — nor will I withhold it. Why I

have entrusted you with a secret so dear to me as that of Esclairmonde's birth will presently appear. Meantime I will answer your first inquiry at once, by saying that I do *not* propose to restore the Princess to her brother, till the full object of her detention shall be accomplished. I have other and more extended views respecting her. In a word, I have yet to dispose of her hand in marriage."

The Cavalier started.

"How?" exclaimed he, with some impatience—"Will your Majesty exercise the power which you have acquired over the destiny of this Princess, to give away her hand without the consent — without the knowledge — of her brother Henri de Bourbon?"

"Without his consent—without her own" returned Catherine.—"Think you the Prince de Condé's approval will be needed to ratify an alliance proposed and sanctioned by Catherine de Medicis? I shall bestow her upon him who serves me best, not on him

who may please her fancy most, or that of Henri de Bourbon. The choice of the one might fall upon some hostile leader of the Protestant party--the election of the other, were she consulted, might be declared in favour of some such arrogant adventurer as the young Scot, whose life now hangs upon my breath; and who, as I learn from Ruggieri, hath already dared to offer his suit to her."

"It must have been in ignorance, Madame, of her real rank that he did so," returned the Cavalier, "for, whatever opinion I may entertain of the scope and aim of Crichton's ambition, I cannot think that, had he been acquainted with Esclairmonde's exalted birth, he would have ventured to aspire to her hand."

"He has already aspired to the favours of Marguerite de Valois," returned Catherine, frowning, "and he who will dare to soar so high in gallantry, will scarce content himself with a lowly flight in love. You

are mistaken in your estimate of this Scot's character, monsignore: I read it more clearly than you do. His ruling passion is ambition. He aims at distinction in all things; and were I to free him from his fetters, and to entrust him with the secret I have just now communicated to you, the first use he would make of his liberty would be to renew his suit with redoubled ardour to the Princess—”

“ There, I am assured, you wrong him, Madame.”

“ No matter,” interrupted Catherine, “ I shall not afford him the opportunity. Crichton is of an order of men who must be crushed ere they attain a dangerous eminence. To elevate him would be to endanger my own power. Henri is ruled, as you well know, by his minions; the minions are ruled by Crichton. His mental acquirements—his bravery, and his various and unequalled accomplishments have already obtained complete ascendancy over a court, which, of all others, is most easily dazzled by such qualities.”

“And are these the only faults you can lay to Crichton’s charge, Madame ?” asked the Cavalier.

“No,” replied Catherine, “he has yet a greater fault.”

“Beseech your Majesty, name it.”

“He is of incorruptible honesty,” rejoined Catherine—“had he been otherwise, he had been the fittest instrument I could have chosen for my purposes—as it is, he is only an obstacle—”

“Which will be speedily removed,” rejoined the Cavalier, gravely. “Suffer me to change the subject, and to return to that from which we have wandered.”

“The Princess of Condé—true,” replied Catherine, “you beheld her at the Louvre to-night, Signore—I would gladly learn what is your opinion of her attractions ! Is her beauty equal to that of the dames of our native Italy, think you ?”

“It is without a peer in Italy or elsewhere,” sighed the Cavalier.

Catherine smiled complacently.

“Mary Stuart,” said she, “(whom Esclairmonde so much resembles) in the zenith of her youth and loveliness—when the walls of the Louvre resounded with the sighs of a thousand worshippers—and when the whole chivalry of Europe flocked to the Court of France to sun themselves in her smiles—was not so beautiful.”

“I can well believe it, Madame,” returned the Cavalier, in a tone of some despondency,—“I have myself seen the unfortunate Queen of Scotland, and her charms of person, wondrous as they still are, cannot, I think, have equalled the matchless perfections of Esclairmonde.”

Catherine again smiled. And it was with some playfulness of manner that she now continued the conversation.

“She is indeed most lovely,” said the Queen,—“so lovely, that I think, if Anjou’s suit fail, as is not unlikely, with that experienced coquette, our *sister*, (as her years, as well as her regal dignity, entitle her to be termed) Elizabeth of England, I shall con-

sole him for his disappointment with the hand of the fairest Princess of her time. What he loses in power our son will gain in beauty. How say you, Signore ?—Does this alliance meet with your approval ? ”

“ Beseech you, Madame, press not that question upon me,” replied the Cavalier, in a troubled tone ; “ and to be frank with you let me confess at once, that if the object of your conference be the consideration of an alliance between the Duc D’Anjou and Esclairmonde, I am myself far too deeply interested in the fate of the fair Princess, to be able to offer an impartial opinion upon the policy or impolicy of the proposed union, and must, therefore, with your Majesty’s permission, decline its further discussion. Esclairmonde’s charms would alone entitle her to the hand of the proudest Prince in Europe, who might deem himself supremely blest in their possession.”

“ Say you so, Monseigneur ? ” returned Catherine, gaily. “ What if I change the title and designation of the bridegroom ? What, if

for François de Valois, Duc D'Anjou, I substitute that of Vincenzo di Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua,—will that alliance please you better.”

“ Madame !” faltered the Cavalier.

“ Have I not read your heart aright ? Do you not love this maiden ? ”

“ More than my life.”

“ She is yours, then—I give her to you—and, moreover, I will enrich her with a dowry from the coffers of the state, such as neither the D'Este nor the Farnese could bestow.”

A deep-drawn sigh was the only response made by the Cavalier. Putting her own construction upon his silence, the Queen continued :—

“ Lend your aid with arm and counsel to place Anjou upon his brother's throne, and Esclairmonde is your reward.

“ And is the best blood of France,” returned the Cavalier, with bitterness, “ to be bartered for treason ? ”

“ These are strange words from you, Prince,”

rejoined Catherine, “ Can I have been mistaken in you ? Have I fostered a secret foe—are your own despatches—are those letters delusive ? Answer me, Don Vincenzo. Do I address an ally of Anjou, or a secret foe of Henri—the friend of an aspiring Prince, or the tool of a falling Monarch ? ”

“ You speak to one who thinks, acts, and speaks freely and fearlessly, Madame ; who aspires to honour by honourable means—and who would hurl from his grasp the sceptre of France could it be attained only by treachery. Your plot against Henri, phrase it how you may, is treasonable.”

“ I will not quarrel with your terms, Prince,” replied Catherine, coldly. “ Words are to me the cloak ’neath which the sword is hidden, and the more honestly they *sound*, the less suspicion they are likely to awaken. You are welcome, therefore, to call our plot rebellious, so long as you enact the part of an arch-rebel yourself. But enough of this. You say you love the Princess of Condé. Assist Anjou in his (if you so please to phrase them)

treasonable designs. — Place him upon the throne ; and she shall be the meed of your services.”

Catherine paused, and fixed her eagle glance upon the Cavalier, awaiting his reply. But he spoke not. Contending emotions seemed to agitate his bosom.

“ What means this ? ” exclaimed the Queen, rising in displeasure—“ Do you reject my offer ? ”

“ I may not embrace it, Madame.”

“ Ha ! ”

“ A fatal bar exists.”

“ Your passion for this girl—this Gelosa—is it so ? By our Lady ! there *must* be witchcraft in the case. Ruggieri, proceed with thine enchantments — I must dissolve the spell. Prince,” continued she, in a stern deep tone, “ reflect upon our offer. I shall expect your answer on the morrow. Meanwhile, bury the secret we have committed to your keeping within the recesses of your heart. Breathe it not even to your confessor. You can now conjecture where-

fore I desired this interview with you—wherefore I selected you as the depositary of the secret of Esclairmonde's birth. You have perused those evidences of her illustrious origin. You have satisfied yourself she is the daughter of Henri de Bourbon. I will now commit those documents to the secure custody of this coffer."

Saying which, Catherine extended her hand to receive back the packet.

"An instant, Madame, I beseech you," returned the Cavalier, still detaining the papers, while his eyes appeared eagerly to scan their contents.

"You will have more leisure for their perusal on the morrow," replied the Queen—"in the meantime turn your thoughts to her who more immediately claims your attention."

At this conjuncture, and ere Catherine could possess herself of the package, the chamber was plunged in darkness. Unobserved, during their conference, the Dwarf had

silently crawled near the speakers, and at a signal from Ruggieri, suddenly extinguished the lamp, which hung above their heads.

“The letters,” demanded Catherine hastily. And, as she spoke, what she conceived to be the package, was placed in her hands.

Suddenly a low and plaintive strain of music,—whence proceeding, it was impossible to determine—was heard ; and at the same moment, a cool and refreshing perfume addressed itself to the senses of the Cavalier. The effect of this subtle spirit, combined with the rich and fragrant exhalations of the chafing-dish, induced an agreeable langour, against the overpowering influence of which it was in vain to contend. It disposed the mind unresistingly to surrender itself to the delusions about to be practised by the Sorcerer. Through the dense cloud of vapour that now filled the apartment, nothing could be seen but the dull red fire of the brasier : and the symphony became each instant more faint,

until it gradually died away. The voice of the Astrologer was then heard chanting the following

Incantation.

LOVELY spirit, who dost dwell
In the bowers invisible,
By undying Hermes rear'd ;
By Spagyric sage revered ;
Where the silver fountains wander ;
Where the golden streams meander ;
Where the Dragon vigil keeps
Over mighty treasure heaps ;
Where the mystery is known,
Of the wonder-working Stone ;
Where the Quintessence is gained,
And immortal life attained—
Spirit!—by this spell of power,
I call thee from thy viewless bower.

The footstep of the Astrologer was now heard, approaching the brasier. A hissing noise, as of some fluid cast upon the fiery coals succeeded. Fresh volumes of smoke ascended to the ceiling, emitting vivid sparks as they arose, and Ruggieri, muttering some unintelligible sounds, continued his spell.

The charm is wrought—the word is spoken,
And the sealed vial broken !
Element with element
Is incorporate and blent ;
Fire with water—air with earth.
As before creation's birth ;
Matter gross is purified,
Matter humid rarified ;
Matter volatile is fixed,
The spirit with the clay commixed.
Laton is by azoth purged,
And the argent-vif disgorged ;
And the black crow's head is ground,
And the magistery found ;
And with broad empurpled wing
Springs to light the blood-red king.
By this fiery assation—
By this wond'rous permutation !
Spirit, from thy burning sphere,
Float to earth—appear—appear !

For an instant all became dark. Even the dull glare of the chafing-dish was obscured. A fresh strain of music more soft, more plaintive than the preceding melody was heard. A dazzling stream of light was seen to cut swiftly through the air, and to settle near the Astrologer. It was then perceived that this

brilliant flame flowed from a sword held by a female shade, robed in shining attire of almost gossamer texture. This sylph-like figure, so far as it could be discerned through the vapour, appeared of rare and almost unearthly loveliness. In her right hand the spirit bore the flaming brand we have described, in her left, a small vase of crystal; while in a thrilling voice she warbled the following strains:—

Song of the Spirit.

I.

WITHIN the golden portal
Of the garden of the wise,
Watching by the seven-spray'd fountain,
The Hesperian Dragon lies.*

* The above lines are little more than a versification of some of the celebrated President *D'Espagnet's* Hermetic canons, with which the English adept must be familiar in the translation of Elias Ashmole. *D'Espagnet's Arcanum Philosophiae Hermeticae* has attained a classical celebrity among his disciples, who were at one period sufficiently numerous. The subjoined interpretation of this philosophical allegory may save the uninitiated reader some speculation. 'La Fontaine que l'on trouve à l'entrée du Jardin est le Mercure des Sages, qui sort des sept sources, parce qu'il est le principe des sept métaux, et qu'il est formé par les sept planètes, quoique le soleil seul soit

Like the ever-burning branches
 In the dream of Holy Seer ;
 Like the types of Asia's churches
 Those glorious jets appear.
 Three times the magic waters
 Must the winged Dragon drain ;
 Then his scales shall burst asunder,
 And his heart be reft in twain.
 Forth shall flow an emanation,
 Forth shall spring a shape divine,
 And if Sol and Cynthia aid thee,
 Shall the Charmed Key be thine.

II.

In the solemn groves of Wisdom,
 Where black pines their shadows fling,

appelé son père et la lune seule sa mère. Le *Dragon*, qu'on y fait boire est la putrefaction qui survient à la matière, qu'ils ont appelée *Dragon*, à cause de sa couleur noire, et sa puanteur. Ce Dragon quitte ses vêtemens, lorsque la couleur grise succède à la noire. Vous ne réussirez point si Venus et Diane ne vous sont favorable, c'est-à-dire, si par la régime du feu, vous ne parvenez à blanchir la matière qu'il appelle dans cet état de blancheur le règne de la Lune."—*Dictionnaire Mytho-Hermétique*. The mysterious influence of the number *Seven* and its relations with the planets is too well known to need explanation here. Jacques Bohom has noticed it in the enigma contained in his *Aquarium Sapientium*, beginning—

*Septem sunt urbes, septem pro more metalla
 Suntque dies septem, septimus est numerus.*

Near the haunted cell of Hermes
 Three lovely flow'rets spring.
 The violet damask-tinted,
 In scent all flowers above ;
 The milk-white vestal lily,
 And the purple flower of love.
 Red Sol a sign shall give thee
 Where the sapphire violets gleam,
 Watered by the rills that wander
 From the viewless, golden stream.
 One violet shalt thou gather—
 But ah !—beware, beware !—
 The lily and the amaranth
 Demand thy chiefest care.*

III

Within the lake of crystal,†
 Roseate as the sun's first ray,
 With eyes of diamond lustre‡
 A thousand fishes play.

* Vous ne séparerez point ces fleurs de leurs racines—
 c'est-à-dire, qu'il ne faut rien ôter du vase. Par ce moyen
 on aura d'abord les violettes de couleur de saphir foncé,
 ensuite de lys, et enfin l'amaranthe, ou le couleur de
 pourpre, qui est l'indice de la perfection du soufre aurifique.
Dic. Mytho-Herm.

† Les Philosophes ont souvent donné le nom du *Lac* à leur
 vase, et au mercure qui y est renfermé. *Dic. Mytho-Herm.*

‡ Lorsque la matière est parvenue à une certain degré de
 cuisson, il se forme sur sa superficie de petites bulles qui
 ressemblent aux yeux des poissons. *Dic. Mytho-Herm.*

A net within that water,
 A net with web of gold,
 If cast where air-bells glitter,
 One shining fish shall hold.

IV.

Amid the oldest mountains,*
 Whose tops are next the sun,
 The everlasting rivers
 Through glowing channels run.
 Those mountains are of silver,
 Those channels are of gold ;
 And thence the countless treasures
 Of the kings of earth are roll'd :
 But far—far must he wander
 O'er realms and seas unknown ;
 Who seeks the ancient mountains,
 Where shines the WONDROUS STONE !

As the spirit concluded her song, she presented the crystal vial to the Astrologer, exclaiming :—

In that mystic vase doth lie,
 Life and immortality.
 Life to him who droops in death,
 To the gasping bosom breath ;

* Quelquefois les Alchimistes ont entendu par le terme de *Montagne* leur vase, leur fourneau, et toute matière métallique. *Dict. Mytho-Herm.*

Immortality, alone,
To him, to whom the “Word” is known
Take it—’tis a precious boon,
Vouchsafed by Hermes to his son.

Ruggieri reverently received the gift. And, as if extinguished at a breath, the blue flame that played upon the edge of the sword suddenly expired, and the phantom vanished. The brasier once more became visible, and the magician resumed the performance of his mysterious rites. At a gesture from his master, Elberich brought a pannier filled with sundry magical ingredients, together with a ponderous volume, fastened with brass clasps, and clothed in black vellum. From time to time, Ruggieri took some herb or root from the basket, and cast it into the brasier, where it crackled and fumed, and eventually burst into flame. Nothing was wanting to add to the effect of the ceremonial. The dwarf gibbered, the cat hissed, Druid uttered a deep and prolonged howl. The suffumigation mounted in clouds—and the voice of Ruggieri hoarse and broken, and half choked by

the vapour he inhaled, arose above the clamour. Thus ran his invocation :

ON the smouldering fire is thrown,
Tooth of fox, and weazel's bone,
Eye of cat, and scull of rat,
And the hooked wing of bat,
Mandrake's root, and murderer's gore,
Henbane, hemlock, hellebore,
Stibium, storax, bdellion, borax,
Ink of cuttle-fish, and feather
Of the screech-owl, smoke together.

With his Astrolabe Ruggieri proceeded to trace certain figures upon the floor, and taking the Black Book from the Dwarf, read aloud a mystical sentence ; after which he closed the volume, and resumed his spell :

On the ground is a circle traced ;
On that circle a seal is placed ;
On that seal is a symbol graven ;
On that symbol an orb of heaven ;
By that orb is a figure shown ;
By that figure a name is known ;
Wandering witch it is thine own !—
But thy name must not be named ;
Nor to mortal ears proclaimed ;
Shut are the leaves of the grimoire dread ,
The spell is muttered—the word is said,

And that word, in a whisper drowned,
Shall to thee like a whirlwind sound.
Swift through the shivering air it flies—
Swiftly it traverses earth and skies ;—
Wherever thou art—above—below—
Thither that terrible word shall go.
Art thou on the waste alone,
To the white moon making moan ?
Art thou human eye eschewing,
In some cavern philters brewing ?
By familiar swart attended—
By a triple charm defended—
Gatherest thou the grass that waves
O'er dank pestilential graves ?
Or on broom, or goat astride,
To thy Sabbath dost thou ride ?—
Or, with sooty imp dost match thee ?—
From his arms my spell shall snatch thee.
Shall it seek thee—and find thee,
And with a chain bind thee ;
And through the air whirl thee,
And at my feet hurl thee !
By the word thou dreadst to hear !
Nameless witch !—appear—appear !

The words were scarcely pronounced, when a rushing sound was heard, and the figure of a hideous hag suddenly stood before the Astrologer. About her withered neck and shoulders, the witch's wintry locks hung in wildest disorder ; her apparel was loathly and forbidding as her features. For a moment

she remained with one arm leaning upon a staff, and with the other, smeared, it would seem, with blood, stretched out towards Ruggieri.

“ Whence comest thou ? ” demanded the Astrologer.

“ From my Sabbath revel at Montfaucon,” replied the Hag.—“ Would’st hear how we have passed the night ? Would’st learn what pranks we have played beneath the moon,—how Sathan hath piped for us,—how the dead have danced with us,—how we have boiled infant’s flesh—brewed philters,—and confected poisons ? —ha ! —ha ! —attend.” And in a harsh discordant tone, she sang the following wild rhymes.

The Sorcerer’s Sabbath.*

I.

AROUND Montfaucon’s mouldering stones,
The wizard crew is flitting;
And ’neath a Jew’s unhallowed bones,
Man’s enemy is sitting.

* Le Loyer observes, that the *Saboe, evohe* sung at the

Terrible it is to see
Such fantastic revelry !
Terrible it is to hear
Sounds that shake the soul with fear !
Like the chariot wheels of Night
 Swiftly round about they go ;
Scarcé the eye can track their flight,
 As the mazy measures flow.
Now they form a ring of fire ;
Now a spiral, funeral pyre :—
Mounting now, and now descending,
In a circle never ending.
As the clouds the storm-blast scatters—
As the oak the thunder shatters—
As scared fowl in wintry weather—
They huddle, groan, and scream together.

*orgia, or Bacchanalia, agrees with the acclamations of the conjurers and witches,—‘ Her Sabat—Sabat ;’ and that Bacchus, who was only a devil in disguise, was named *Sabasius* from the Sabbath of the Bacchanals. The accustomed form of their initiation was expressed in these words, “ *I have drunk of the drum, and eaten of the cymbal ; and am become a proficient ;*” which Le Loyer explains in the following manner :—By the *cymbal* is meant the caldron used by the modern conjurers to boil those infants they intend to eat ; and by the *drum* the goat’s skin, blown up, from whence they extract its moisture, boil it up fit to drink, and by that means are admitted to participate in the ceremonies of Bacchus. It is also alleged the name *Sabbath* is given to these assemblies of conjurers, because they are generally held on *Saturdays*.
—Monsieur Ouse :—Description of the Sabbath.*

Strains unearthly and forlorn
Issue from yon wrinkled horn,
By the bearded demon blown,
Sitting on that great gray stone.

*Round with whistle and with whoop,
Sweep the ever-whirling troop:
Streams of light their footsteps trail,
Forked as a comet's tail.
"Her Sabat!—Sabat!—” they cry ;
An Abbess joins their company.*

II.

Sullenly resounds the roof,
With the tramp of horned hoof :—
Rings each iron-girdled rafter
With intolerable laughter ;
Shaken by that stunning peal,
The chain-hung corses swing and reel.
From its perch on a dead-man's bone,
Wild with fright, hath the raven flown :
Fled from its feast hath the flesh-gorged rat ;
Gone from its roost is the vampire-bat ;
Stareth and screameth the screech-owl old,
As he wheeleth his flight through the moonlight
wold :
Bays the garbage-glutted hound ;
Quakes the blind mole underground.
Hissing glides the speckled snake ;

Loathliest things their meal forsake.
From their holes beneath the wall,
Newt and toad and adder crawl,—
In the Sabbath-Dance to sprawl !

*Round with whistle and with whoop,
Sweep the ever-whirling troop :
Louder grows their frantic glee—
Wilder yet their revelry.
“ Her Sabat !—Sabat !—” they cry—
A young girl joins their company.*

III.

See that dark-hair'd girl advances,—
In her hand a poignard glances ;
On her bosom, white and bare,
Rests an infant passing fair ;
Like a thing from heavenly region,
'Mid that diabolic legion.
Lovelier maid was never seen
Than that ruthless one, I ween ;
Shape of symmetry hath she,
And a step, as wild-doe, free.
Her jetty hair is all unbound,
And its long locks sweep the ground.
Hushed in sleep her infant lies—
“ Perish ! child of sin,” she cries ;
“ To fiends thy frame I immolate—
To fiends thy soul I dedicate !
Unbaptized, unwept, unknown—
In hell thy sire may claim his own.”

From her dark eyes fury flashes—
 From her breast her babe she dashes.
 Gleams the knife—her brow is wrinkled,—
 With warm blood her hand is sprinkled!—
 Without a gasp—without a groan,
 Her slumbering infant's soul hath flown.
 At Sathan's feet the corse is laid—
 To Sathan's view the knife display'd.*
 A roar of laughter shakes the pile—
 A mocking voice exclaims the while :—
 “ By this covenant—by this sign,
 False wife ! false mother ! thou art mine !—
 Weal or wo, whate'er betide,
 Thy doom is seal'd, infanticide !
 Shall nor sire's, nor brother's wrath,
 Nor husband's vengeance cross thy path ;
 And on *him*, thy blight, thy bane,
 Hell's consuming fire shall rain !”

*Round with whistle and with whoop,
 Sweep the ever-whirling troop ;
 In the caldron bubbling fast,
 The babe is by its mother cast !
 “ Emen hetan !” shout the crew,
 And their frenzied dance renew.*

* Sathan will have an ointment composed of the flesh of unbaptized children, that these innocents being deprived of their lives by these wicked witches, their poor little souls may be deprived of the glories of Paradise.—*De Lancre.*

IV.

The Fiend's wild strains are heard no more.
Dabbled in her infant's gore,
The new-made witch the caldron stirs—
Howl the demon-worshippers.
Now begin the Sabbath rites—
Sathan marks his proselytes ;*
And each wrinkled hag anoints
With unguents rank her withered joints.
Unimaginable creeds—
Unimaginable deeds—
Foul, idolatrous, malicious,
Baleful, black, and superstitious,
Every holy form profaning,
Every sacred symbol staining,
Each enacts, fulfils, observes,
At the feet of him he serves.

— Here a goat is canonized,
Here a bloated toad baptized ;
Bells around its neck are hung,
Velvet on its back is flung ;
Mystic words are o'er it said,
Poison on its brow is shed.†

* The Devil marks the Sorcerers in a place which he renders insensible. And this mark is in some, the figure of a hare—in others, of a toad's foot, or a black cat.—*Delrio. Disquisitiones Magicæ.*

† As the Sabbath Toads are baptized, and dressed in red or black velvet, with a bell at their neck, and another at each foot. The male sponsor holds their head, the female their feet. *De Lancre.*

Here a cock of snowy plume,
Flutters o'er the caldron's fume ;
By a Hebrew Moohel slain,
Muttering spells of power amain.*
— There within the ground is laid
An image that a foe may fade,
Priest unholy, chanting faintly
Masses weird with visage saintly ;
While respond the howling choir
Antiphons from dark grimoire.†
Clouds from out the caldron rise,
Shrouding fast the star-lit skies.
Like ribs of mammoth through the gloom,
Hoar Montfaucon's pillars loom ;
Wave its dead—a grisly row—
In the night-breeze to and fro.

* The sacrifice of a snow-white cock is offered by the Jews at the Feast of the Reconciliation. This was one of the charges brought against the Maréchale D'Ancre, condemned under Louis XIII. for sorcery and Judaism. Another absurd accusation, to which she pleaded guilty, was the eating of rams' kidneys! Those kidneys, however, we are bound to state, had been *blessed* as well as *devilled*. From Cornelius Agrippa, we learn that the blood of a white cock is a proper suffumigation to the sun ; and that if pulled in pieces while living, by two men, according to the ancient and approved practice of the Methanenses, the *disjecta membra* of the unfortunate bird will repel all unfavourable breezes. The reader of Rabelais will also call to mind what is said respecting *le coq blanc* in the chapter of *Gargantua*, treating 'de ce qu'est signifié par les couleurs blanc et bleu.'

† The black Book.

At a beck from Sathan's hand,
Drop to earth that charnel band,—
Clattering as they touch the ground
With a harsh and jarring sound.
Their fluttering rags, by vulture rent,
A ghastly spectacle present ;
Flakes of flesh of livid hue,
With the white bones peeping through !
Blue phosphoric lights are seen
In the holes where eyes have been :
Shining through each hollow scull,
Like the gleam of lantern dull !
— Hark ! they shake their manacles—
Hark ! each hag responsive yells !
And her freely-yielded waist
Is by fleshless arms embraced.
Once again begins the dance—
How they foot it—how they prance !
Round the gibbet-cirque careering,
On their grinning partners fleering,
While, as first amid their ranks,
The new-made witch with Sathan pranks.
— Furious grows their revelry,—
But see !—within the eastern sky,
A bar of gold proclaims the sun—
Hark ! the cock crows—all is done !

*With a whistle and a whoop,
Vanish straight the wizard troop !
On the bare and blasted ground,
Horned hoofs no more resound :
Caldron, goat, and broom are flown,
And Montfaucon claims its own.*

“Thou hast called me,” said the hag, as she concluded her song.—“What wouldst thou with me? Be brief.—Ashtaroth hath called me twice. The third summons I must obey. There are mortals here whose presence frets me. They are not marked with the sign, or baptised with the baptism of hell. Besides I am in haste to rejoin the revel I have quitted. My aching bones are unanointed, and the caldron boils over. Speak, and let me go.”

“Daughter of darkness—foul hag that thou art,” cried Ruggieri, in a voice of thunder, “was it to hear thine accursed strains that I summoned thee hither?—no—thy master may call thee, but I will detain thee at my pleasure”—saying which he sprinkled some liquid upon her face: “Now,” continued he, as the witch howled with pain, “art thou content to tarry?”

“What wouldst thou?” demanded the hag, fiercely.

“I would have the potion, which thou alone of all thy brood of Tartarus canst

prepare," returned the Astrologer, " the draught which will turn love to hate—and hate to love. Hast thou that philter by thee? If so, give it to me, and thou art free to depart."

" I have that will serve thy purpose better," responded the hag, drawing from her girdle a silver ring fashioned like a wreathed serpent —" this enchanted hoop. Thou shalt have it. But take heed upon whom thou bestowest it. Thy boon may prove unlucky to thyself, for

Little thrift
Hath witch's gift.

Ha—ha!"

" Leave that to me," cried Ruggieri, impatiently.

" Ah! there again," exclaimed the witch, " Ashtaroth calls, his tone is wrathful. A moment, master, a moment, and I come. The wizards are shrieking — the fiend is piping, the unguent is seething! — Well—well, I will be there anon. Take it—take it,

With a blight and with a ban,
On love of maid, and faith of man.

Take it with the witch's benison, or malison,
which you will—and listen to me—

When the moon was in her trine,
And the star of love benign ;
When a purple gleam was sent
From red Mars beneficent ;
And one ray from Saturn flowing,
Struck the cusp of Scorpio glowing ;
Was this wizard ring confected,
And the potent charm perfected.
Gathered at propitious hour
Stone and herb of sovereign power,
Gray ætites, coral white,
Jaspar green, and chrysolite ;
Vervain, violet, and myrrh,
And all flowers that frenzy stir,
Through this ring were swiftly passed,
And in heaps around it cast.
And the fragrant pile was lighted,
And a magic verse recited,
And the starry signs were sought,
And their mystic symbols wrought.
Bound with spell—inscribed with sign—
Take this charmed ring—'tis thine,
He who wears it need not woo,
Woman's will 'twill swift subdue.

And with a wild scream of laughter the witch
vanished.

The Cavalier, meantime, had witnessed Rug-

gieri's magical ceremonials with impatience, somewhat curbed by astonishment. Prepared to treat the whole performance as the juggling exhibition of a charlatan, he was, nevertheless, greatly struck by the extreme ingenuity displayed by the Astrologer in his contrivances—nor less surprised at the extent of his resources, and the nature of the confederacy required to give due effect to his impostures. But when he reflected upon the length of time which Ruggieri had supported the character of a magician, and that the turret he inhabited had been erected under his own direction, his wonder at his skill diminished, and his impatience to bring the scene to a close, returned with greater force than before. The delay was in one respect accordant with his wishes, as it enabled him to revolve some means of extricating himself from the perilous situation in which he was placed, or, at least, of accomplishing the purpose now dearest to his heart—that of communicating to Esclairmonde the secret of her birth. For some time he was lost

in painful speculation. Suddenly a plan occurred to him: the expedient was hazardous—but it was the only one which could, with any probability of success, be adopted. Taking a packet from his bosom, he unfastened his scarf, in the folds of which he placed the letters, together with the knot of ribands given to him by Esclairmonde, and then calling Druid towards him, contrived in the gloom, unperceived, to swathe the bandage firmly round the body of the dog. This done, with heart elate, he arose and advanced towards the Astrologer. At this juncture the Witch disappeared. Ruggieri heard his step, and, in a voice in which rage struggled with terror, exclaimed, “Retire—retire, or you endanger soul and body. Tread not within that magic circle. The girl is yours. Be patient an instant.—Take this ring—the witch’s gift—it will render your suit resistless—and withdraw, or by Ori-masis! I will exert my art to enforce compliance with my injunctions.”

Saying which, Ruggieri thrust the ring

upon the Cavalier's finger and stamped upon the floor. The latter uttered an exclamation of impatience, but at that moment his mantle was seized behind with such unlooked-for energy, that he was involuntarily dragged several paces backwards. Placing his hand upon his poignard, the Cavalier was about to free himself from his assailant, who he doubted not was the dwarf, when his design was checked by the relinquishment of the grasp, and by the sudden opening of a curtain disclosing to his view within a small recess, the sleeping figure of the Gelosa.

CHAPTER XIX.

VISOR FOR VISOR.

Vous avez parlé, masque.

RABELAIS. *Pantagruel. Liv. II. Ch. XIX.*

SUSPENDED over the pallet upon which she lay, a lamp threw a faint light upon the features of the unfortunate singer. Her countenance was deathly pale; and though her slumber was calm, it was evidently not the repose induced by "nature's best nurse," but the torpor occasioned by some medicated potion. Escaped from their confinement, her raven tresses wandered over

her person still clothed in the boyish garb of the morning; and their dusky hue contrasted strikingly with the exceeding fairness of her neck and throat, now partially exposed by the disorder of her habiliments. Something there was in her situation so touching as powerfully to enlist the sympathies of the Cavalier in her behalf; and (shall we injure him in the esteem of our fair readers if we confess so much?) something so resistless in her beauty as to awaken in his bosom a momentary emotion more akin to love than to pity. In palliation of this brief disloyalty we may add, that Catherine de Medicis, hitherto a stranger to the attractions of the Gelosa—as she regarded her features with some attention, was so struck with her beauty, that she no longer felt any surprise at the extravagant passion with which she had inspired her illustrious admirer.

“ By our Lady!” exclaimed she, “ the girl is fairer than we thought her. Is it possible that that lovely creature can be lowly born ?”

“ It would seem not from the amulet I hold,” replied the Cavalier.

“ Permit me to examine that key more narrowly, monsignore,” said Ruggieri, advancing towards them; “ I may be able to resolve her Majesty’s question. Meantime I pray you take this phial. The damsel sleeps, as you perceive, but let her breathe from this flacon, and her slumbers will at once be dissipated.”

“ Twere better she should awake no more than to dishonour,” murmured the Cavalier, as he took the phial, and restored the golden key to Ruggieri. “ Poor girl!” he mentally ejaculated as he approached the couch,—“ my chance of rescuing thee from persecution, and from what is worse than death is now slight indeed. But the attempt shall be made. I have vowed to accomplish thy rescue, and I *will* accomplish it or perish in the effort!” And with these musings the Cavalier employed the phial as directed by Ruggieri. He had not to wait long for the result of his application. The

Gelosa started and unclosed her eyes; but as her gaze fell upon the Cavalier's sable mask, with a scream of terror, she hastily averted her head. "He here again," shrieked she,—"mother of mercy, shield me from this demon!"

The Cavalier bent his head over the shrinking maiden, and in a low tone breathed in her ear her name—"Ginevra."

Not more suddenly does the falcon turn her wing at her master's call, than did the Gelosa start at the Cavalier's voice. Trembling from head to foot, she raised herself upon the couch; she bent her gaze upon his figure; she peered into the holes of his mask as if to seek some further confirmation of her hopes; she dashed aside her blinding tresses, passed her fingers rapidly across her brow, as if to collect her scattered senses, and in a low tone, exclaimed—"That voice coupled with that hideous phantom—me thought I heard my own name pronounced by tones, so loved, so tender—but it must have been a dream—how should he know

my name? Oh! I am very faint." And she again sank backwards.

The Cavalier regarded her with deep commiseration; but scarcely knowing how far in her present state of excitement it would be prudent to trust her with a knowledge of his plans, he deemed it advisable to resume the disguised tone of voice he had adopted in his conference with Catherine.

"For whom do you take me, Ginevra?" asked he.

"For whom?" exclaimed the maiden,—"I took you for an angel of light. I find you are a spirit of darkness. Hence and leave me. Torture me no longer with your presence. Have I not already endured agony enough at your hands? Must dishonour likewise be my portion.—Never. I have resisted all your efforts—your blandishments—your entreaties—your force—and I will continue to resist you. I can yet defy your power, as I defied you in your palace at Mantua. Woman's love may be fickle,—her hate is constant. I hate you, Prince, and I will die a

thousand deaths rather than yield to your embraces."

As Ginevra spoke, she became, for the first time, aware of the disordered state of her apparel. If her complexion had been heretofore as white as that of mountain snow, its hue was as suddenly changed as that of the same snow when it is tinged by the purpling sunset. Neck, cheek, and throat were turned to crimson by the hot and blushing tide; while shame, mingled with resentment, was vividly depicted upon her glowing countenance.

"Ah! false and felon knight," cried she, bitterly, "thou hast done well to steal upon a maiden's privacy—upon her slumbers—but get thee hence, or by the Virgin I will tear off this bandage from my wound, and breathe out my life before thine eyes. Ah! why was not that blow more surely aimed—why did I not perish in saving Crichton!"

"And do you love Crichton thus devotedly?" asked the Cavalier.

"Do I love him?" repeated Ginevra—

“ do I love heaven—adore its saints—hate *thee*? — Love *him!*” continued she, passionately—“ he is to me life—nay, more than life. Understand me, thou, whose dark heart can only couple love with desire—the affection which I bear to Crichton is that of the devotee for the saint. He is my heart’s idol—its divinity. I aspire not to *his* love. I ask for no return. I am content to love without hope. It were happiness too much to have died for him. But having failed in that, think not I will live for another.”

“ Then live for him!” said the Cavalier in an under-tone, and resuming his natural voice.

To describe the effect produced upon the Gelosa by these words, and by the sudden change of tone, were impossible. She passed her hand across her brow—she gazed upon her masked companion in doubt and amazement, and then exclaimed under her breath, and with a look, as if her life hung upon the issue of her inquiry.—“ Is it?”

“It *is*,” returned the Cavalier.

Her head declined upon his shoulder.

Catherine was not more surprised at this sudden change in the Gelosa’s manner, than the Astrologer appeared to be.

“Thy spell begins to work, good father,” said she, “the girl relents.”

“Maledizione” cried Ruggieri, furiously.

“How!—art thou not satisfied with thine own handiwork?” demanded Catherine, in surprise, “thou art distraught.”

“Tis because it *is* mine own handiwork that I am distraught,” returned the Astrologer. “My gracious mistress,” continued he, throwing himself at the Queen’s feet, who viewed his conduct with increased astonishment, “I have served you faithfully—”

“Go to—what wouldst thou?”

“I ask one boon in requital of my long services—a light request, Madame?”

“Name it.”

“Suffer not yon girl to quit the chamber to-night. Or, if she must go hence, suffer me to accompany her.”

Catherine returned no answer, but clapping her hands together, the Dwarf, in obedience to her signal, rushed to the trap-door.

To return to the Cavalier. His efforts, seconded by his kindly words, speedily restored the Gelosa to consciousness. Gently disengaging herself from his embrace, and casting down her large eyes, as if she feared to meet his gaze, she thus, in a low tone, addressed him: “Pardon me, noble Signor, my late freedom of speech. My lips have betrayed the secret of my heart, but on my soul I would not so have spoken had I deemed that my words would ever have reached your ears.”

“I need not that assurance, fair Ginevra,” returned the Cavalier, “and much doth it pain me to think that your love is fixed upon one who can only requite your devotion with a brother’s tenderness. Listen to me. With this key you will pass, by a subterranean outlet, to the Hôtel de Soissons. Escape will then be easy. Tarry without its walls, on the quarter nigh the church of Saint

Eustache, for an hour. If in that space I join you not, depart, and go upon the morrow to the Louvre. Seek out the Demoiselle Esclairmonde, — do you mind that name, Ginevra?"

"I do—" gasped the Gelosa, with a sudden pang of jealousy.

"You will find her amongst the attendants of the Queen Louise. Bear to her this paper."

"'Tis stained with blood," cried Ginevra, as she received the letters.

"'Tis traced with my dagger's point," rejoined the Cavalier. "Will you convey it to her?"

"I will."

"And now," continued the Cavalier, "collect all your energies. You must leave this chamber alone."

"And you,—?"

"Heed me not. A fate dearer than mine hangs upon that paper—upon your safety. You have said you love me. You have approved your devotion. I claim a further

proof. Whatever you may hear or see, tarry not. When I bid you, go. You have a poignard—ha?"

"What Italian woman is without one."

"It is well. You who dread not to die, need fear nothing. Your hand. I am once more the Mask. Be firm—ha! it is too late."

This latter exclamation was uttered as the Cavalier perceived the trap-door open, and Catherine's guard ascend. One by one the dark figures stepped upon the floor. At last appeared the Mask bound, and conducted by Loupgarou and Caravaja.

"What means this?" inquired the affrighted Gelosa.

"Ask not, but follow me," replied the Cavalier, advancing quickly towards the Queen.

"Madame," exclaimed he, "before this execution takes place, I pray you suffer this maiden to withdraw. Let her await our coming forth within the corridor of your palace."

“ Be it so,” returned Catherine.

“ Go,” whispered the Cavalier to Ginevra —“ you have the key—there is the masked door.”

“ She stirs not hence,” said Ruggieri, seizing the maiden’s arm.

“ What mean’st thou, old man?” cried the Cavalier. “ What right hast thou to oppose her departure?”

“ A father’s right,” returned Ruggieri—“ she is my child.”

“ Thy child!” screamed the Gelosa, recoiling—“ oh no—no—no—not thy child.”

“ Thou art the daughter of Ginevra Malatesta,—thou art likewise my daughter.”

“ Believe him not, dear Signor,” cried the Gelosa, clinging to the Cavalier,—“ he raves —I am *not* his daughter.”

“ By my soul I speak the truth!” ejaculated Ruggieri.

“ My patience is exhausted,” exclaimed the Queen; “ let the girl tarry where she is. I have not done with her. Crichton’s execution shall no longer be delayed.”

“ *His* execution !” cried the Gelosa, with a thrilling scream. “ Is it Crichton whom you would put to death ?”

“ Be calm,” whispered the Cavalier. “ Heed not me. In the confusion make good your own escape.”

At this moment Catherine again clapped her hands. There was a movement amongst the men-at-arms, and the Mask was dragged forwards. A block of wood was then placed upon the ground by Caravaja. The sword of Loupgarou gleamed in the air.

The Cavalier placed himself between Catherine and the executioners. His hand was laid upon his vizard.

“ You have said the withdrawal of your mask should be the signal of Crichton’s doom,” cried the Queen, addressing the Cavalier, “ are you prepared, monseigneur ?”

“ I *am* prepared, Madame,” replied the Cavalier calmly, “ to meet my own fate. Not against yon Mask, but against me must your vengeance be directed. I am Crichton.”

And as he spoke, he withdrew his vizard.

“Traitor!” exclaimed Catherine, as she beheld the features of the Scot; “have I then been thy dupe all this while; have I been betrayed into the avowal of my most secret schemes,—into the commission of a grievous and scarce pardonable indignity to my nearest and dearest ally?—Have I—but thy cunning shall avail thee little—Dieu merci!—thou art still in my power. Prince Vincenzo,” continued she, turning to the Mask, whose vizard having been in the confusion hastily removed by Caravaja, discovered dark, haughty lineaments, inflamed with choler, and strongly impressed with the lofty and peculiar character, proper to the Southern noble—(a character which the reader will at once understand if he will call to mind the grave and majestic Venetian faces which he may have haply looked upon in the portraits of Titian)—“Prince Vincenzo,” said Catherine, addressing Gonzaga, who still remained surrounded by the guard—“what reparation can I offer

you for the affront I have thus, unintentionally, put upon you?"

"One only reparation will I accept," cried Vincenzo, proudly shaking off the grasp of Loupgarou, and advancing towards the Queen.

"Give me to understand your wishes," returned Catherine.

"I claim the life of my adversary," retorted Gonzaga.

"Now, by my soul, Prince," said Catherine in a deep whisper, "you have asked a boon I cannot grant. Crichton's life is necessary to my safety—to *your* safety. He must die."

"He *shall* die, Madame, upon the morrow," returned Vincenzo in the same tone. "But the blazon of Gonzaga were for ever stained, my honour as a knight for ever spotted, if he, whom I have defied to mortal combat, should be assassinated in my presence. He must be set free."

"His death will lie at my door," replied Catherine. "He is in possession of our

schemes—of Anjou's plot—and of a secret of vital import, which I deemed I had communicated to yourself—no, he must die."

"I had rather perish upon the block, by the hands of those miscreants, than suffer my honour to be thus sullied," exclaimed Gonzaga, "Hear me, Madame," cried he aloud. "Suffer him to depart; and I will gage my princely faith that the Chevalier Crichton betrays no secret—reveals no plot. The laws of honour, imperative on me, are not less binding upon him. Let him depart without fear, and intrust the work of vengeance to me. To-morrow we meet as mortal enemies—to-night we part as fair foemen."

"Gage not your faith for me, Prince," said Crichton, who with sword and dagger, fiercely confronted his assailants, "I can neither accept life nor freedom upon the terms you propose. If I depart hence, the secret I have obtained will be revealed—nay, if my voice be silenced in death, my

last gasp will be cheered with the conviction that other tongues than mine will breathe it for me."

" Ha!" exclaimed Catherine.

" *My* vengeance will survive me, Madame," continued the Scot; " you may float this chamber with my blood; may hew me limb from limb—that secret will escape you—nay it *has* already escaped you. I may never behold her more—may never exchange word with her again, but—ere tomorrow's sun shall set, the proof of her birth will be laid before the Princess of Condé."

" Thou liest!" cried Catherine.

" Where are the despatches of Tavannes; the letters of the Cardinal of Lorraine; your own written authority?" demanded Crichton.

" Ha!" exclaimed Catherine, hastily glancing at the packet she held within her hand—" Traitor! where are they?"

" On their way to the Louvre," replied Crichton.

“ Impossible !”

“ I have found a faithful messenger—”

“ En verdad, sa magestad, this braggart’s only messenger can have been the great dog who accompanied him,” exclaimed Caravaja. “ The accursed brute dashed down the trap-door as we ascended, and I remarked that he had a scarf twisted round his throat.”

“ That scarf contained the letters,” said Crichton, with a smile of triumph.

“ And the hound escaped you ?” demanded Catherine of the Spaniard.

“ It is a fiend in bestial shape,” replied Caravaja; “ the phantasm was out of sight in a moment.”

“ Chevalier Crichton,” said Catherine, advancing towards him, and speaking in an under-tone, “ those papers are of more value to me than your life—I will capitulate with you. Upon the conditions offered to you by the Prince of Mantua, you may depart freely.”

“ I have said that I reject them, Madame.

Bid your assassins advance. To heaven and to Saint Andrew I commit my cause."

"I will die with you," murmured Ginevra.

"Rash girl, thou hast no part in this fray," cried Ruggieri,—"hence with me—with thy father."

"Never," shrieked the Gelosa. "I will not quit the Signor Crichton's side — the blow which is his death, shall be mine likewise. Let me go, I say—I am not thy child. Thou hast invented this story to betray me."

"Hear me, Ginevra—I have proofs—"

"No, I will not listen to thee. Thou wouldst have bartered my honour for the Prince of Mantua's gold. Was that a father's love? If thou *art* my father, leave me, and draw not my blood, as well as that of my mother, upon thy head,—for, by our Lady of Pity! I will plunge this steel to my heart rather than yield to thy licentious master."

"Ginevra, I would free thee from him. In mercy listen to me." But ere he could pro-

ceed, the fiery girl drew her dagger, and extricating herself from his grasp, once more took refuge by the side of Crichton.

Catherine, meantime, despite the indignant remonstrances of Gonzaga, who being unarmed, could take no part in the conflict, had commanded the men-at-arms to assault the Scot. “Upon him, knaves,” cried she, “what do you fear?—he is but one—strike! and spare not.”

Crichton breasted their fury, as the rock resists and hurls back the breakers. The gleam of their swords flashed in the eyes of the Gelosa ; the clash of steel resounded in her ears. The strife was terrific. Amidst it all, the Scot remained uninjured: not a thrust could reach him, while several desperate wounds were received by his antagonists. The vociferations, the clamour, the trampling of feet were deafening. Suddenly the noise ceased. Catherine looked to see if her enemy had fallen. She beheld him in an attitude of defence, calmly regarding his antagonists, who had drawn back to

take breath, and to consider upon some new plan of attack. Mortified and dismayed, the Queen began to apprehend the issue of the combat might yet be determined in favour of Crichton, when she beheld a dark figure stealing behind him. It was the Dwarf. With stealthy steps she saw him approach the Scot. He bounded forward—a dagger was in his grasp—when at that moment he was felled by the stiletto of the Gelosa. Catherine could not restrain an exclamation of displeasure. “Cravens,” cried she, “ye lack the nerves of men—give me a sword, and I will show you how to wield it.” Thus exhorted, the ruffian band renewed the conflict, and with better success than before. A few blows only had been exchanged, when Crichton’s sword, a light rapier, intended more for ornament than use, was shivered, and with the exception of his poignard, a feeble defence against six trenchant blades, he lay at their mercy. A savage yell was raised by his opponents. A few moments more they saw would now decide the fight. Resolved, however, to

sell his life dearly, Crichton darted forwards and seizing the foremost of the crew by the throat, plunged his dagger into his breast. The wretch fell with a deep groan. His comrades pressed on to avenge him. With his cloak twisted round his arm, Crichton contrived for some moments to ward off their blows, and to rid himself of another foe. The odds were too great—it was evident what must be the result of a contest so unequal : nevertheless the Scot's defence was so gallant as still to leave his enemies in incertitude, when, as he seconded a feint with a thrust at Loup-garou, his foot slipped upon the floor now floating in blood, and he stumbled. Swifter than thought, Ginevra interposed her own person between Loup-garou and Crichton, and the blow intended for him must have transfixed her had not a loud cry from Ruggieri arrested the hand of the giant.

“Spare my child!—spare her! my gracious mistress!” ejaculated the distracted Astrologer.

“Spare neither,” said Catherine, sternly.

Crichton, however, had recovered his feet. A word even in that brief interval had passed between him and the Gelosa. Ere his intention could be divined, he had flown together with the maid to the recess—and the curtains falling at the same moment to the ground concealed them from view. An instant afterwards, when these hangings were withdrawn by Caravaja, and Loupgarou, they had disappeared. A masked door within the wall, half open, shewed by what means their flight had been effected.

“Sangre de Dios!” cried Caravaja, as this door was suddenly closed, and a bar, as was evident from the sound, drawn across it on the other side, “our purpose is frustrated.”

“Malediction,” ejaculated Loupgarou—“whither doth that outlet lead?”

As he spoke the giant felt his leg suddenly compressed by a nervous gripe, while, at the same time, a noise, like the hissing of a serpent, sounded in his ears. Starting at the touch, Loupgarou beheld the red orbs of Elberich fixed upon him. The unfortunate

mannikin, wounded to death, had contrived to crawl towards him. The stream of life, flowing in thick and inky drops from his side, was ebbing fast — but the desire of vengeance lent him strength. Directing the giant's attention towards a particular part of the wall, he touched a spring, and another door flew open. Through this aperture the Dwarf crept, beckoning to Loupgarou, who, with Caravaja and his two remaining followers, instantly proceeded after him.

Scarcely had the party disappeared when the door through which Crichton had approached the turret from the Queen's palace, revolved upon its hinges, and the Vicomte de Joyeuse, accompanied by Chicot, and attended by an armed retinue entered the chamber. He cast a quick glance round the room, and his countenance fell as he beheld the bloody testimonials of the recent fray.

“ *Monseigneur*,” said he, advancing to-

wards Gonzaga, who remained motionless with his arms folded upon his breast, “ I have it in his Majesty’s commands to assure myself of your person till the morrow.”

“ A prisoner ! ” exclaimed Gonzaga, his hand vainly searching for his sword—“ know you whom you thus address ? ”

“ I know only that I address one whom I hold to be a loyal Cavalier,” returned Joyeuse, quickly — “ but when I gaze around this chamber, and behold these marks of butchery, doubts arise in my mind which I would fain have removed. Whom have I the honour to place under arrest ? ”

“ The Prince of Mantua,” replied Catherine. —“ The King’s arrest cannot attach to him.”

“ Vive Dieu ! ” exclaimed the Vicomte, bowing, “ I am indeed much honoured. You are, however, mistaken, Madame. His Majesty’s arrest does attach to the Prince. Messieurs, to your charge I commit his highness. My duty is only half fulfilled.

May I crave to know where I shall meet with the Chevalier Crichton, if he be, as I conjecture, within this turret?"

" You will scarcely need to assure yourself of *his* person, monseigneur," replied Catherine, smiling ; " my attendants have already saved you that trouble."

" How, Madame ! " exclaimed Joyeuse, starting,

" Outcries and footsteps resound from this doorway," ejaculated Chicot. " Methinks I hear the voice of Crichton—there again—to the rescue, monsieur le Vicomte."

" Prince," cried Joyeuse, " you shall answer to me for the life of the Chevalier Crichton. In his quarrel with you I was chosen his *parain*, and by Saint Paul, if he has perished by assassination in your presence, I will proclaim you felon and craven, throughout every court in Christendom."

" Monsieur le Vicomte, you do well to threaten a prisoner," replied Gonzaga, haughtily. " But a season will arrive when you shall answer to *me* for these doubts."

“ And to *me*, likewise,” added Catherine, haughtily. “ Monsieur le Vicomte, we command you and your followers to withdraw on pain of incurring our deepest resentment.”

“ I am his Majesty’s representative, Madame,” returned Joyeuse, proudly, “ and invested with his authority to seek out and detain the Prince of Mantua, somewhat distinguished as ‘the Mask,’ together with the Chevalier Crichton, during his sovereign pleasure. You are best aware what account you will render of the latter to his Majesty.”

“ To the rescue ! to the rescue ! Monseigneur,” screamed Chicot, “ I hear a female voice.”

“ My daughter ! my daughter !” ejaculated Ruggieri.

“ Some of you take charge of yon caitiff,” exclaimed Joyeuse, pointing with his sword to the Astrologer—“ he is concerned I doubt not in this foul transaction,—and now follow me who may !— Montjoie ! Saint-Denis !—on !—”

Saying which he dashed through the nar-

row portal, and sprang swiftly up a dark and winding staircase, down which the echoes of oaths and other vociferations now distinctly resounded.

CHAPTER XX.

THE COLUMN OF CATHERINE DE MEDICIS.

On luy attachoit ung cable en quelque haute tour pendant en terre : par icelluy avecques deux mains montoit, puis devaloit si roidement, et si asseurement, que plus ne pourriez parmy ung pré bien egallé.

RABELAIS. *Gargantua.* *Liv. I. Ch. xxiii.*

OPPOSITE the rue de Viarmes, and reared against the circular walls of the Halle-au-Blé—with its base washed by a fountain,—its shaft encircled by a cylindrical dial, and huge gnomonic projection, and its summit surmounted by a strange spherical cage of iron—stands, at this day, a tall, fluted, richly decorated, Doric column ; bearing upon its aspect

the reverend impress of antiquity. The fountain and dial are of modern, the spherical crest of ancient, construction. Tradition assigns this observatory, for such it is, to Catherine de Medicis, and Cosmo Ruggieri. From hence she is said to have nightly perused within the starry scroll of heaven, the destinies of the great city stretched out at her feet; while, from the same situation, Ruggieri is reported to have gathered the lore by which he was enabled to avert the stroke of danger, and to strengthen and consolidate his mistress's power. The iron cage, supposed to have some recondite allusion to the mysteries of astrology, was, in all probability, contrived by the Florentine seer. Its form is curious, and has given rise to much speculation. Consisting of a circular frame-work of iron, crossed by other circles, it is supported by a larger hemisphere of iron bars;—"des cercles et des demicercles entrelacés," says M. Pingré;—the object of which it is difficult to conceive unless they were intended as types of the science to the uses of

which the structure was devoted. Erected after the designs of the celebrated Jean Bullan, this pillar, situated, at the period of our narrative, in the angle of a lateral court of the Hôtel de Soissons, is the sole remnant now existing of that vast and magnificent edifice. Its history is remarkable—but it is not our purpose to relate it. Suffice it to say, that it was preserved from the general demolition of Catherine's palace, by the generosity of a private individual, le Sieur Petit de Bachaumont, by whom it was redeemed at the price of 1,500 livres. The effect of the observatory is materially injured by its contiguity to the Halle-au-Blé, and its symmetry destroyed by M. Pingré's horologiographical contrivance, as well as by a tasteless tablet, placed above its plinth. Notwithstanding these drawbacks—viewed either in connection with its historical associations, or with the mysterious and exploded science of which it is a relic,—the column of Catherine de Medicis can scarcely be regarded with indifference. Within its deeply cut chamfering,

now almost effaced by time, are still to be traced emblematic devices, similar to those heretofore mentioned as adorning the walls of Ruggieri's laboratory. Having now described the external appearance of the pillar, it remains only to add that its elevation is nearly a hundred feet from the ground, while its diameter embraces a span of somewhat more than nine feet.

To return. When Crichton and the Gelosa disappeared through the recess, their course was for a few moments shaped along a low, narrow passage, evidently contrived within the thickness of the wall, which, after a brief but toilsome ascent, conducted them to what appeared, from the increased height of the roof, and greater space between the walls, to be a sort of landing place. Whether there was any further outlet from this spot, the profound darkness in which all was involved, left them no means of ascertaining. As they tarried for an instant to recover breath, Crichton took advantage of the occasion, warmly to express his thanks to his fair com-

panion for the succour she had so opportunely afforded him. "But for you," said he, "fair Ginevra, I had perished beneath the daggers of Catherine's assassins. To you I owe my life a second time,—how—how shall I requite your devotion?"

"By suffering me to be your slave," cried the impassioned girl, pressing his hand to her lips and bathing it with her tears, "to remain ever near you."

"You shall never leave me," returned the Scot kindly; carrying his gratitude to a scarce allowable length, for as he spoke, his lips sought the burning mouth of the Gelosa, while his arms pressed her closely to his bosom.

"Santa Madonna!" exclaimed Ginevra, hastily drawing back her head, deeply abashed at the impulse to which she had yielded, "our pursuers are at hand."

At the same moment, also, Crichton became aware of the sound of hoarse voices and approaching footsteps.

"There is—there must be a further outlet

— this chamber communicates with the Queen's observatory," cried the Gelosa — "I mind me that I was dragged to some such place as this, by him who falsely calls himself my father, a few hours ago. Each wall in this frightful turret is perforated like a state dungeon, with secret passages. Step forward, sweet Signor, and you will find the outlet."

With outstretched hand Crichton guided himself rapidly along the wall. The aperture was instantly discovered. His foot was on the flight of steps.

"Follow me, Ginevra," cried he, extending his hand in the direction of the damsel. But a grasp was laid upon her, from which she could not extricate herself. At the same moment a hissing laugh proclaimed her captor to be the vindictive Dwarf. With supernatural force the mannikin twined himself round her person. The maiden felt herself sinking. His hot breath was upon her face — his horrible mouth approached her throat. She experienced a sharp and sudden thrill of pain. The vampire having no

other weapon, sought to fix his teeth in her neck. In this extremity, as she gave herself up for lost, Elberich's grasp relaxed, and the monster sank, an inert mass, to the earth. Crichton's poignard had freed her from her foe; while his arm bore her up the spiral stairs, just as Loupgarou and his crew reached the landing place. The Giant heard the struggle between Ginevra and Elberich—he heard also the fall of the latter, and with a bound sprang forward. He was too late to secure his prey, and stumbling over the prostrate body of the Dwarf, impeded with his huge person, the further advance of his followers. Muttering deep execrations, he then arose and began to ascend the column. After mounting some forty or fifty steps, a dull light admitted through a narrow slit in the pillar cheered his progress.

“By my fay!” cried Loupgarou, as he gazed through this loophole upon the gardens of the Hôtel de Soissons, just visible by the uncertain light of a clouded moon

—“we are within her Majesty’s observatory — those are the royal gardens — and yonder are the old towers of Saint Eustache.”

“En verdad compañero,” replied Caravaja, thrusting forward his visage and surveying in his turn the scene, “thou hast said it. It must be the structure I have so often gazed at from the rue des Etuves, with the cage in which folks say Ruggieri keeps Señor Sathanas confined. Many a time have I seen that sooty imp, whose carcase we have left in the room below, practise a thousand fantastic trickeries upon those iron bars. There used to be a rope from which he would fling himself headlong from the summit, and swing backwards and forwards like an ape or a juggler, to the terror of all pious observers. —Ha! — what means that clamour, and clashing of swords. There are others at work besides ourselves. Vamos camarada ! ”

“Softly,” replied the lethargic giant, pausing to take breath—“we do not need to hurry ourselves, *quo magis properare studeo, eo me impedio magis*—as we say in the

schools! We are certain our Scot is in this turret; we are certain, moreover, that he cannot descend without passing us; we are furthermore certain that we are four, and that he is but one; *ergo* we may safely reckon upon his head—and upon our reward."

"*Concedo consequentiam,*" returned Caravaja,—“but proceed most redoubted Goliath, or this puissant David may prove too much for thee after all. Ha! hear you that shot? Some one has discovered him from below—mount! dispatch!”

Thus urged, Loupgarou recommenced the ascent.—Another and another loophole shewed him what elevation he had attained, and at length his mighty head came in contact with a plate of iron, which proved to be a trap-door opening upon the summit of the column, but which was now fastened on the other side. Here was an unexpected difficulty thrown in their path, not entirely to the dissatisfaction of our Giant, who, despite his bulk and sinew, like all other men of vast proportions, was of

a somewhat craven nature at bottom, and regarded the approaching struggle with considerable misgiving. He deemed it necessary, however, to conceal his gratification under a mask of oath and bluster, and seconding his words with a show of resolution, applied his shoulder to the trap-door with so much good will, that, to his astonishment, it at once yielded to his efforts. To recede was now impossible. Caravaja and his comrades were swearing in the rear ; so putting a bold face upon the matter, he warily emerged. What was his surprise, and we may say, delight, to find the roof deserted. In proportion to his security his choler increased.

“ Hola !—my masters,” roared he,—“ we are tricked—duped—deceived. This Crichton is in league with the fiend. He has made himself a pair of wings, and flown away with the girl upon his back—! Mille tonneres ! we are robbed of our reward.”

“ San Diablo !” exclaimed Caravaja, as he also emerged from the trap-door.—“ Gone ! —ha—higados !—I perceive the device.”

We will now return to the Scot and his fair charge. Sustaining the terrified girl, who was so much exhausted as to be wholly unable to assist herself, within his arms, Crichton rapidly threaded the steps of the column. Arrived at the summit, and gently depositing Ginevra upon the roof, he stood with his dagger in hand prepared to strike down the first of his assailants who should appear at the mouth of the staircase. The cold fresh air playing upon her cheek in some degree revived the Gelosa. She endeavoured to raise herself, but her strength was unequal to the effort. At this moment an outcry was heard below. It was the voice of Blount, calling to his dog. Crichton uttered an exclamation of delight. The packet had reached its destination—it would be delivered to Esclairmonde. Scarcely had this thought passed through his mind, when the sudden report of an arquebuss was heard — succeeded by a deep howl. Blount's shouts mingled with those of Ogilvy arose loud and stunning. The clash of swords succeeded. Crichton

could no longer resist the impulse that prompted him to glance at the combatants. He leaned over the edge of the pillar, but all that he could discern was the Englishman engaged in sharp conflict with several armed figures partially concealed from his view by the intervening shrubs of the garden. Druid was by his side, foaming, furious, and with his teeth fastened upon one of his master's assailants. The scarf was gone. Whether or not it was in Blount's possession, he was unable to ascertain. As he turned in doubt and some dejection towards the trap-door, his eye chanced upon a coil of rope attached to one of the links constituting the larger hemisphere of iron bars by which he was surrounded. A means of escape at once suggested itself to his imagination. Swift as thought he tried the durability of the cord. It was of strength sufficient to sustain his weight: and of more than sufficient extent to enable him to reach the ground. He uttered an exclamation of joy; but he suddenly checked himself. The plan was relin-

guished as soon as formed. He could not abandon the Gelosa.

Ginevra divined his intentions. Collecting all her energies, she threw herself at his feet beseeching him to avail himself of the opportunity that presented itself of safety by flight.

“ And leave you here to fall into the hands of your pursuers—of Gonzaga—never,” replied Crichton.

“ Heed me not—heed me not—noble and dear Signor,” replied the Gelosa, “ I have *my* means of escape likewise—go—go—I implore of you. What is my life to yours? By the Virgin!” continued she, with passionate earnestness, “ if you do not obey me, I will fling myself headlong from this pillar, and free you from restraint, and myself from persecution.”

Saying which she advanced to the brink of the column, as if resolved upon putting her threat into instant execution.

“ Hold, hold, Ginevra,” exclaimed Crichton—“ we may both avoid our foes. Give

me thy hand, rash girl"—and ere she could advance another footstep the Scot detained her with a powerful grasp. Ginevra sank unresistingly into his arms. Crichton's next proceeding was to make fast the trap-door; the bolt of which, presented such feeble resistance to the Herculean shoulder of Loupgarou. He then threw the cord over the edge of the column, and advanced to the brink to see that it had fallen to the ground. As he did so he was perceived and recognised by Ogilvy, who hailed him with a loud shout, but as that doughty Scot was engaged hand to hand with a couple of assailants, he was not in a condition to render his patron any efficient assistance. Having ascertained that the cord had dropped in the way he thought desirable, Crichton again assured himself of the firmness of the knot, and placing his dagger between his teeth, to be ready for instant service on reaching the ground, and twining his left arm securely round the person of the Gelosa, whose supplications to be abandoned to her fate were unheeded, he grasped the rope tightly with

his right hand, and leaning over the entablature of the column, pushed himself deliberately over its ledge.

For a moment the rope vibrated with the shock ; and, as she found herself thus swinging to and fro in mid air, Ginevra could scarcely repress a scream. Her brain reeled as she gazed dizzily downwards, and perceived the space that intervened between her and the earth. Her head involuntarily sank over her shoulder, and she closed her eyes. Had her safety depended on her own powers of tenacity she had certainly fallen.

The rope, meanwhile, continued its oscillations. With one arm only disengaged, and the other encumbered by his fair burthen, it was almost impossible for Crichton to steady it. The architrave and frieze which crowned its capital, projected nearly two feet beyond the body of the shaft. For some time he could neither reach the sides of the pillar so as to steady his course by its fluted channels, nor would he venture to trust himself to the guidance of the shifting cord. His peril ap-

peared imminent. The strain upon the muscles was too great to be long endured. But Crichton's energies were inexhaustible, and his gripe continued unrelaxing. At length, after various ineffectual efforts he succeeded in twining his legs securely round the rope, and was about to descend, when an incident occurred which rendered his situation yet more perilous.

Filled with astonishment at the daring attempt they witnessed, as Crichton launched himself from the column, the combatants beneath—friend and foe, as if by mutual consent,—suspended hostilities. It was a feat of such hair-breadth risk, that all gave him up for lost. But, when he had made good his hold, their admiration knew no bounds. Blount loudly hurraed, and threw his cap into the air. Even the adverse party uttered a murmur of applause. Ogilvy rushed forward to seize and secure the rope—and all had been well, but at the same moment he was grappled by one of his antagonists, and in the struggle which ensued,

the cord was so violently shaken that Crichton had need of all his vigour to maintain his position. The rope twisted round and round, —but contriving, in the gyrations which he performed, to insert the point of his foot in the fluting of the pillar, he once more regained his equilibrium.

“ Villain,” cried Ogilvy, as he threw his enemy to the earth, and plunged his dirk within his bosom—“ thou at least shalt reap the reward of thy treachery—Ah! what is this?” cried he, as from the folds of a scarf, which had dropped from the man’s grasp, a packet of letters met his view. He was about to pick them up, when his attention was diverted by a loud cry from Blount.

“ Ha!—have a care! — noble Crichton,” shouted the Englishman—“ have a care! I say. Saint Dunstan and Saint Thomas, and all other good saints, protect thee!—Desist— craven hound, what wouldst thou do? The curse of Saint Withold upon thee!”—The latter part of Blount’s ejaculation was addressed to Loupgarou whose huge person

was now discovered leaning over the architrave of the pillar, and who was preparing to cut the rope asunder with his sword—"Oh for a sling!" roared Blount, "to smite that accursed Philistine betwixt the temples."

Directed by these outcries, and, at the same time, perceiving the effect of a blow upon the rope, Crichton looked upwards. He beheld the malignant and exulting aspect of Loup-garou who, it is needless to say, through the agency of Caravaja, had discovered the mode of flight adopted by the Scot, and instantly resolved upon the only revenge in his power. It was evident from his gestures and ferocious laughter, that the Giant had resolved to exercise his utmost ingenuity in torturing his enemy. Before he attempted to sever the cord he shook it with all his force--jerking it vehemently, first on the right hand, and then on the left—but finding he could not succeed in dislodging the tenacious Scot, he had recourse to another expedient. Taking firmly hold of the iron bar, by dint of great exertion, he contrived to pull the cord up several feet.

Uttering a loud yell, he let it suddenly drop. Still Crichton, though greatly shaken, maintained his hold. Loupgarou then proceeded slowly to saw the cord with his sword. Crichton gazed downwards. He was still more than sixty feet from the ground.

“ Ho—ho !” bellowed Loupgarou, “ not so fast, beau sire,—*qui vult perire pereat*—ho !—ho ! you shall reach the ground without further efforts of your own, and somewhat more expeditiously—*sternitur exanimisque tremens procumbit humi*—ho ! ho !”—

“ That fate shall be thy own, huge ox,” screamed a shrill voice (it was that of Chicot) in his ear.—“ Ho—ho,” laughed the Jester, as the giant, whom he pushed forward with all his might, rolled heavily over the entablature—“ not so fast—not so fast—my Titan.”

“ *Quién adelante no mira, atrás se queda,*” exclaimed Caravaja, springing upon the Jester with the intent of pushing him upon the giant—“ thou shalt reverse the proverb—look first and leap after.” The words, however, were

scarcely out of his mouth, when he found himself seized by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, who suddenly appeared on the roof of the column.

Loupgarou made an effort to grasp at the architrave of the pillar as he was precipitated over it—and then at the rope—but he missed both. His great weight accelerated his fall. He descended head foremost. His scull came in contact with the sharp, projecting, edge of the plinth, which shattered it at once ; and his huge frame lay without sense upon the pavement of the court just as Crichton and his now senseless burthen alighted in safety upon the ground.

“ By my bauble !” cried Chicot, as he hailed Crichton from the summit of the column, “ the great gymnastic feats of Gargantua equal not your achievements, compère.”

But Crichton was too much occupied to attend to the Jester. He had now to defend himself against the assault of Gonzaga’s followers, whose object was to possess themselves of the person of the Gelosa.

At this moment the call of a trumpet sounded from the summit of the pillar, and the next instant some dozen men-at-arms, in the livery of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, made their appearance at its base.

“Down with your swords, in the king’s name,” cried the sergeant of the guard. “Chevalier Crichton, in the name of his most Catholic Majesty, Henri Trois, you are our prisoner.”

“Where is your leader?” demanded Crichton sternly, “to him alone will I surrender myself.”

“He is here, *mon cher*,” cried Joyeuse, from the top of the pillar, “and rejoices to find you are in safety. I will join you, and render all needful explanations. Meantime, you must, perforce, continue my prisoner; your adversary, Gonzaga, hath yielded himself without demur.

“ ’Tis well,” replied Crichton, throwing down his poignard.

We shall not pause to describe the rapturous congratulations of Ogilvy and Blount. The

former appeared so anxious to relieve his patron from the burthen of the fair singer, that he at length committed her to his care. The disciple of Knox gazed at her with admiration, and his bosom heaved with strange but inexpressible emotions as he held the lovely player girl in his arms.

“ Ha !” exclaimed Crichton, turning hastily to Blount, “ thy dog—hath he reached thee ?”

“ He is here,” replied Blount, patting Druid, “ he has been slightly hurt in this fray—poor fellow—the ball of an arquebuss hath grazed his side.”

“ There was a scarf twined around him—thou hast it ?” demanded Crichton.

“ I saw nothing,” answered Blount, staring in astonishment at the question.

“ A scarf,” ejaculated Ogilvy ; “ did it contain a packet ?”

“ It did,” rejoined Crichton.—“ Have you seen it ?”

“ ‘Tis here,” answered Ogilvy, springing forward, and once more committing the Gelosa to his patron.—“ Ha !—here is the

sash," cried he, " and a knot of ribbands—
but the packet is gone. —"

" Search—it may have escaped thy re-
gards."

" It is nowhere to be found," replied
Ogilvy, after a vain quest.

" Ah!" exclaimed Crichton, in a tone of
anguish, " all my exertions then are fruitless.
—The prize is lost as soon as obtained."

END OF THE FIRST NIGHT.

THE SECOND DAY.

February V.

1579.

Signor Giacomo caro, non vi accorgete che sete un giovane senza pare? Nobile, bello, dotto, e robusto, ed alto quasi egualmente, or lingua or mano adoprando, a dire e fare ogni bene? Rare sono in valore colate umane condizioni sparse e disgiunte in diversi parti: paro di ognuna di dette quattro, meritamente si fanno istorie e poemi, quanto adunque si de istimare, quando si aggiungono in un sol uomo, qual sete voi? Io veramente non ho letto chi le adunasse in se stesso, se non fa forse Alessandro Magno, il quale in voi rinascendo, torni a raccoglierle un altra volta e in uome vostro le manifesti.

SPERONE SPERONI. *Al Signor Giacomo Critonio Scozzese.*

THE SECOND DAY.

CHAPTER XXI.

HIC BIBITUR !

Or, dist Pantagruel, faisons ung trauson de bonne chiere,
et beuvons, je vous en prie, enfans—car il faict beau boire
tout ce mois.

RABELAIS. *Gargantua.* *Liv. II. Ch. XXX.*

ON the day succeeding the events we have related, and about two hours before noon, the interior of the Falcon (a small, but greatly frequented cabaret in the rue Pelican, to which we have before alluded, and which was famed alike for the excellence of its wines, and the charms of its hostess) presented a scene of much bustle and animation. The tables were covered with viands; the benches

with guests. The former consisting of every variety of refection, liquid and solid, proper to a substantial meal of the sixteenth century ; from the well-smoked ham of Bayonne, and savoury sausage of Bologna, to the mild *potage de levrier*, and unctuous *soupe de prime*. The latter exhibiting every shade of character from the roystering student (your scholars have always been great tavern hunters) and sottish clerk of the Basoche, to the buff-jerkined musqueteer, and strapping sergeant of the Swiss Guard. The walls resounded with the mingled clatter of the trencher, the flagon, and the dice-box ; with the shouts of laughter, and vociferations of the company, and with the rapid responses of the servitors. The air reeked with the fumes of tobacco, or, as it was then called, *herbe à la Reine*, pimento, and garlic. Pots of hydromel, hippocras, and claret, served to allay the thirst which the salt meats we have mentioned (*compulsoires de beuvettes*, according to the Rabelaisian synonyme) very naturally provoked ; and many a deep draught

was that morning drained to the health of Dame Fredegonde, the presiding divinity of the Falcon.

When we said that the wines of Dame Fredegonde were generally approved, we merely repeated the opinion of every member of the University of Paris, whose pockets were not utterly exhausted of the necessary *métal ferruginé*; and when we averred that her charms were the universal theme of admiration, we reiterated the sentiments of every jolly lansquenet, or Gascon captain of D'Épernon's '*Quarante Cinq*,' whose pike had at any time been deposited at her threshold, or whose spurs jingled upon her hearth.

Attracted by the report of her comeliness, half the drinking world of Paris flocked to the Falcon. It was the haunt of all lovers of good cheer, and a buxom hostess.

Ah ! comme on entrail
Boire à son cabaret !

Some women there are who look old in their youth, and grow young again as they

advance in life: and of these was Dame Fredegonde. Like her wine, she improved by keeping. At eighteen she did not appear so young, or so inviting, as at eight and thirty. Her person might be somewhat enlarged—what of that? Many of her admirers thought her very embonpoint an improvement. Her sleek black tresses, gathered in a knot at the back of her head; her smooth brow, which set care and time, and their furrows at defiance; her soft dimpled chin; her dark laughing eyes, and her teeth, white as a casket of pearls, left nothing to be desired. You could hardly distinguish between the ring of your silver real upon her board, and the laughter with which she received it. She might have sat to Béranger for his portrait of Madame Gregoire, so well do his racy lines describe her—

Je crois voir encor
Son gros rire aller jusqu'aux larmes,
Et sous sa croix d'or
L'ampleur de ses pudiques charmes.

To sum up her perfections in a word—she was a widow. As Dame Fredegonde, not

withstanding her plumpness, had a very small waist, and particularly neat ancles, she wore an extremely tight boddice, and a particularly short vertugardin ; and as she was more than suspected of favouring the persecuted Huguenot party, she endeavoured to remove the impression by wearing at her girdle a long rosary of beads, terminated by the white double cross of the League.

Among her guests, upon the morning in question, Dame Fredegonde numbered the Sorbonist, the Bernardin, the disciples of Harcourt and Montaigu, and one or two more of the brawling and disputatious fraternity, whose companionship we have for some time abandoned. These students were regaling themselves upon a Gargantuan gammon of ham and a flask of malvoisie. At some distance from this party, sat Blount, together with his faithful attendant Druid, who with his enormous paws placed upon his master's knees, and his nose familiarly thrust upon the board, received no small portion of the huge chine of beef destined for the Englishman's

repast. Next to Blount, appeared Ogilvy, and next to the Scot, but as far removed from his propinquity as the limits of the bench would permit, sat a youth whose features were concealed from view by a broad hat, and who seemed from his general restlessness and impatience of manner, to be ill at ease in the society in which accident, rather than his own free choice, must have thrown him.

We shall pass over the remainder of the company, and come at once to a man-at-arms of very prepossessing exterior, who had established himself in close *juxta-position* with our buxom hostess, with whom he seemed to be upon terms of sufficiently good understanding. There was nothing very remarkable in the costume of this hero. He had a stout buff jerkin, a coarse brown serge cloak, a pointed felt hat with a single green feather, a long estoc by his side, and great spurs in his yellow boots. But there was an ease and grace in his deportment, a fire in his eye, and a tone in his voice that seemed scarcely to belong to the mere common

soldier, whose garb he wore. His limbs were well-proportioned ; his figure was tall and manly ; his complexion ruddy and sunburnt ; his bearing easy and unrestrained, and his look that of one more accustomed to command than to serve. He had immense moustaches — a pointed beard — a large nose slightly hooked, and eyes of a very amorous expression ; and taken altogether, he had the air of a person born for conquest, whether of the fair sex or of kingdoms. His way of making love was of that hearty straightforward kind which seems to carry all before it. Assured of success, he was, as a matter of course, assuredly successful. Dame Fredegonde found him perfectly irresistible. Her last lover, the strapping Swiss Sergeant, who saw himself thus suddenly supplanted, was half frantic with jealousy, and twisting his fingers in the long black beard that descended to his belt, appeared to meditate, with his falchion, the destruction of his fortunate rival.

So far as splendor of accoutrements went, the Swiss had decidedly the advantage. No

magpie was ever finer. His casaque, which gave additional width to shoulders already broad enough, was slashed with red and blue stripes, and girded with a broad red band, tied in a knot and hanging down in points. One of his stockings was red—the other white. A red garter crossed his knee. His barret cap had a projecting steel neb like that of a modern chasseur, with a tuft of scarlet-dyed horsehair dangling behind. Around his throat he wore a huge ruff, down which his beard flowed like the Styx. His curved sword resembled a Moorish scimetar, while against the table by his side rested a halbert with a double-axe head. But neither his parti-coloured raiments, his beard, nor his gestures, could draw from Dame Fredegonde, a single smile of encouragement. She was completely monopolized by the invincible owner of the buff-jerkin.

Meanwhile, the scholars had finished their malvoisie, and were calling loudly for a fresh supply of claret.

Hola! pulchra tabernaria — queen of the

cellar ! ” shouted the Sorbonist, drumming on the table to attract Dame Fredegonde’s attention. “ More wine here ! claret, I say — extemplo ! Leave off love-making for awhile—tear yourself from the arms of that jolly gendarme if you can, like Helen from the embraces of Paris, *et nobis pronâ funde Falerna manū*. To the cellar, good dame — *sine Cerere et Baccho* — you know the rest ; *et amphoram capacem fer cito*. Draw it neat and stint us not : *respice personam, pone pro duo : bus non est in usu*, as the good Grandgousier saith. We are in a great hurry, and as thirsty as sand-beds. Sang de cabres ! campaigns, our hostess is deaf. The jousts we came to see will be over before we have done breakfast. Hola ! — hola — ho ! ”

“ And we shall look as foolish as we did yesterday,” added the Bernardin, thumping upon the board with all his might, “ when we found ourselves on the wrong side of the gates of the college of Navarre, during Crichton’s disputation. Body of Bacchus !

I faint like a traveller in Arabia the Stony.
Have compassion *speciocissima Fredegonda*
—your cups are as far apart as the trieteric orgies.
The tourney was proclaimed by the heralds to
take place at noon, and it is now ten. By the
love you bear the Béjaunes of the University
use some despatch, or surrender to us the
key of the cellar.”

“ The scaffoldings are erected, and the
barriers raised,” cried Harcourt. “ I saw the
carpenters and tapestry-makers at work—the
whole façade of the Louvre looking towards
the gardens blazes with silk and scutcheons.
Cavaliers and pages are thronging thither in
all directions. ’Twill be a glorious sight!
I would not miss it for my bachelor’s gown.”

“ Nor I,” rejoined Montaigu—“ Mordieu !
we shall see how Crichton comports himself
to-day. It is one thing to war with words,
and another with swords. He may find the
brave Prince of Mantua a better match for
him than our sophisters.”

“ He has only to deal with Gonzaga, as he
dealt with some dozen of your classes yester-

day, sirrah," observed Ogilvy, in a scornful tone, "to ensure himself as cheap a victory as he then obtained."

"Ah!—are *you* there, mon brave Écossois," cried the Sorbonist—"I did not notice you before. But one has only to whisper the name of their patron saint, Crichton, and up starts a Scot when one least expects such an apparition. However, I am glad to see you, Sieur Ogilvy—we have an account to settle together."

"The sooner we arrange it, then, the better," cried Ogilvy, drawing his dagger, and springing across the bench.—"I thought you and your rascal rout had met with your deserts at the scourge of the hangman of the Petit Châtelet. But I care not if your chastisement be reserved for my hands. Defend yourself, recreant."

"Not till I have eaten my breakfast," replied the Sorbonist, with considerable phlegm.—"As soon as I have finished my meal, I will assuredly do you the honour of cutting your throat. *Sede interim, quæso.* We are

not now in the rue de Feurre, or the Pré-aux-Clercs, but in the jurisdiction of the Provost of Paris—and under the noses of the watch. I have no intention of baulking your humour, messire Écossais. But I have no fancy for exhibiting myself in the Pilori des Halles to please you. Sit down I beg of you."

"Dastard," cried Ogilvy, "will not a blow move you?"—And he was about to strike the Sorbonist with his clenched hand, when Dame Fredegonde, who had witnessed this altercation with some alarm, suddenly flung herself between the disputants.

"Holy Saint Eloi!" cried she, in a loud tone—"a brawl at this time of the day—and in my reputable house, too, I can scarcely credit my senses. Put up your swords instantly, messires, or I will summon the watch, and give you all into its charge.—Ah! you think I only threaten—you shall see.—Maître Jacques," added she, addressing the Swiss Sergeant—"this is your business. Let tranquillity be restored."

Somewhat gratified that he was at length called into notice by his inconstant mistress, Maître Jacques stretched out his hand, and without altering his position, dragged Ogilvy towards him, and instantly disarmed him with as much ease apparently as you would take a stick from a child, or remove its sting from a wasp. Blount who was a great admirer of feats of strength could not refuse a murmur of approbation at the Sergeant's singular exhibition of vigour.

“ You shall have it again when you have recovered your temper,” said Maître Jacques — “ By my beard,” added he, scowling at the Scholars — “ I will brain with my halbert the first of you who draws his sword.”

Ogilvy regarded the athletic Swiss for an instant, with eyes glowing with indignation, and as if he meditated a reprisal. But a gentle voice from the bench recalled him to his seat; and tranquillity was once more restored.

The soldier, who had watched the dispute and its issue with much nonchalance, now

addressed Dame Fredegonde as she returned to his vicinity.

“ What tourney is this, *ma mie?* ” said he, “ of which these brave Scholars have just now spoken ? You know I am only just arrived in Paris with the King of Navarre’s envoy—and know nothing of court news. Who is this Crichton ?—What doth the Prince of Mantua, if I have heard yon Student aright, in Paris ?—and above all, what are the grounds of quarrel between the combatants ? ”

Do you expect me to answer all those inquiries in a breath, messire ? ” replied Dame Fredegonde, laughing—“ You need not assure me you are a stranger in Paris, since you question me about the Seigneur Crichton. Who is he ? He is handsome enough to be a Prince. But I believe he is only a Scottish gentleman. He is, however, the finest gentleman you ever set eyes upon. The Seigneurs Joyeuse, D’Epernon, and Saint-Luc, and others of his Majesty’s favourites are not to be compared with him. He is as witty as he is handsome; and as wise

as he is witty. Yesterday he had a great disputation with the heads of the University, and they have not had a word to say for themselves since. To-day he jousts with the Prince of Mantua in the gardens of the Louvre at noon, and, I warrant me, he will come off victorious. In short, he has but to speak and you are dumb-founded ; to draw his sword, and his enemy drops at his feet ; to look at a lady, and straightway she falls into his arms."

" Of a verity, a most accomplished Cavalier," said the soldier, with a smile—" but you have not yet told me the occasion of his difference with Gonzaga—What is their cause of quarrel, sweetheart ? — Tell me that ?"

" No one can tell to a certainty," replied Dame Fredegonde, mysteriously ; " but the challenge was given last night at the Louvre. Some say it is about an Italian mistress ; (here the youth near Ogilvy was observed to start)—some that the Seigneur Crichton has

discovered a plot against the King's life, in which Cosmo Ruggieri, and a great lady, whom nobody dares to name,—together with this* Prince are concerned— and that in consequence Don Vincenzo, who has been for some time at the court in disguise, has defied him to mortal combat. Certes, there were strange doings at the Hôtel de Soissons last night, as the Chevalier du Guet, who is a friend of mine, informed me when he made his rounds, They *do* say, also, that the Seigneur Crichton's life was twice endangered—first at the banquet, by the jealousy of another great lady who is in love with him, and who poured a dose of poison into his wine."

" What great lady do you mean, ma mie? surely not the Queen-Mother!"

" Holy Virgin!—no! — not Catherine de Medicis," cried Fredegonde, with a scream of laughter—" The Seigneur Crichton is hardly likely to be in love with *her*."

" Who, then?"

“ You are very inquisitive, messire?—How can it concern you to know in what way queens and o’her great dames revenge themselves on their lovers’ infidelities?”

“ Ventre-saint-Gris!—It may concern me more nearly than you imagine. You know I am from the court at Pau—from Henri of Navarre—You do not mean *his* Queen?”

“ I do not mean the Queen Louise—and you may, therefore, form a shrewd guess whom I *do* mean,” replied Dame Fredegonde, significantly—“ There, you will have a pretty piece of scandal to take back to your king. And, as I live, he could not look more blank than you do at the intelligence, ha—ha—ha!”

“ Peste!” exclaimed the soldier, biting his lip.—“ And it is for this adventurer that Marguerite refuses to leave her brother’s court, and to rejoin her husband.”

“ To be sure!—she would find your psalm-singing Béarnais rather dull after the gay galliard Crichton. But you look serious, messire?”

“ Your sex is enough to make one look serious,” replied the Soldier, forcing a laugh.

“ Femmes sont secrètes
En amour discrètes
Douces mygnonnettes
Et tant bien parlantes,
Mal sont profitables,
Et fort variables
Y sont tous les diables.

Our good Henri will care no more about the matter than I do. And hark!—those Scholars are still clamorous for wine. Allow me to attend you to the cellar? You will want some help to carry that mighty flagon.”

Dame Fredegonde nodded a gracious assent, and they were preparing to depart when the Swiss suddenly interposed his huge person between them and the doorway. The hostess frowned—but the sergeant kept his post. “ Ventreboeuf! comrade,” said he—“ if you go—I go too.”

“ But do you not perceive, my friend,” returned the gendarme, in a conciliating tone—“ that you are in the way.”

“ Humph!—perhaps,” replied the sergeant,

bluffly—"but I do not choose to part company with my betrothed."

"Maitre Jacques!—have I not frequently told you that I look upon obedience as the first of virtues in a husband?" said Dame Fredegonde, with a look as cross as she could compel her good-natured face to assume.

"You have, Madame."

"Return, then, to your seat."

"I have not the happiness to be your husband as yet, Madame."

"If you would ever aspire to that happiness you will do as I bid you."

"Madame has it in her power to procure my instant compliance with her commands."

"How?"

"She has only to name the day."

"Well! let me see—will this day year suit you?"

Maitre Jacques shook his beard.

"Provoking! this day month?"

Still Maitre Jacques appeared dissatisfied.

"This day-week, then?"

The Sergeant opened the door; and as the

pair laughingly left the room, he returned tranquilly to his seat whistling a note or two of the Swiss march. “A sensible man,” observed the Soldier, as he closed the door—“Henri of Navarre would do well to take pattern by his philosophic conduct.”

We will now return to Ogilvy and his companions. Blount continued sedulous in his attentions to the chine ; but the Scot’s appetite was gone. He swallowed a deep draught of wine, and began to hack the table with a knife. To a casual remark, addressed to him by the Englishman, he returned a sullen response. It was evident he was deeply offended. Blount either did not perceive, or would not take his petulance in umbrage, but continued his repast in silence, ever and anon bestowing a morsel of fat upon his dog. The Gelosa, for we doubt not the reader will have recognised in the youth at his side the unfortunate girl, now drew nearer to the wrathful Scot, and laid her hand gently upon his arm. Ogilvy turned his inflamed cheek towards her—

“ What would you ?” asked he.

“ I would quit this place,” said Ginevra,—“ a presentiment of misfortune which I cannot shake off, oppresses me. The clamour distracts me—and I am fearful those reckless scholars may recognise me.—Besides,” added she, with somewhat of reproach in her accent,—“ you but ill fulfil your patron’s injunctions—you were to protect me—not to endanger my safety by provoking hostilities.”

“ Pardon my rashness, fair maiden,” replied Ogilvy, with some confusion,—“ I was wrong in giving way to this foolish display of passion; but where the honour of Crichton is concerned, my feelings are irrepressible.”

“ I honour you for your devotion, brave Signor,” returned the Gelosa, pressing the Scot’s hand to her lips with a fervour that made his life-blood flow to his heart. “ And let not any thought of risk to me deter you from its manifestation. Conduct me hence, and return, if you see

fitting, to avenge yourself upon yon insolent scholar."

" Impossible !" replied Ogilvy—" the escort from the Vicomte de Joyeuse which is to conduct you beyond the gates of Paris, and place you on the route to the frontiers of Italy, is not yet arrived. We must await their coming. It was the Chevalier Crichton's desire that we should do so. Fear nothing fair maiden. I will defend you with the last drop of my blood ; nor shall you again have to reproach my intemperate zeal in my patron's behalf."

" My heart misgives me," replied Ginevra, " but since it was his wish, I will remain here.—I feel as if I were not yet out of the power of that terrible Gonzaga. And then," added she, timidly, and blushing deeply as she spoke, " shall I confess to you, Signor, that I would willingly hazard my safety by remaining in Paris—nay, within the precincts of the Louvre, to witness this tourney. If Vincenzo fall, I have nothing to fear."

“ But from Ruggieri—from Catherine you may still apprehend peril,” returned Ogilvy, “ besides, know you not that the king has commanded a combat *à plaisir*, and not *à outrance*? The Prince may be worsted therefore—but not slain. Your danger will not be diminished by the result of this conflict.”

“ True—true,” replied Ginevra, in accents of despair, “ I shall behold him no more,”

“ Now listen to me, fair maiden,” said Ogilvy, in a deep whisper, “ you love the Chevalier Crichton—”

“ Signor !”

“ Nay, hear me! your love is unrequited—I know it—his heart is pre-occupied. I am of a faith which regards your calling as vain—your creed Idolatrous. The heart, I find, knows no difference of religion. Its worship is from many altars. I love you, Ginevra—and I venture to avow my love,—because a moment hence may snatch you from me for ever. In one respect our feelings are in unison—our devotion to Crichton. I have

no other portion to offer you but a true heart and a stanch sword. Will you accept my hand?"

"Signor," replied the Gelosa coldly, "my calling may be vain—my creed idolatrous—but my heart is firm in its devotion. I *do* love the Chevalier Crichton." And she averted her head.

"Is there no hope for me?" asked Ogilvy, drawing near to her.

"None," answered Ginevra, fiercely—"and if you would not drive me hence, speak no further upon this subject."

A burst of noisy merriment from the scholars came to the relief of the chagrined Scot, and as he turned in the direction of the sound to conceal his mortification, he heard the following irreverent Bacchanalian lay, chanted at the top of his voice by his adversary the Sorbonist; the other students joining in chorus.

*Venite Potemus.**

I.

Venite, jovial sons of Hesper,
 Who from matin unto vesper,
 Roam abroad *sub Domino* ;
 Benedictine, Carmelite,
 Quaff we many a flask to night
 Salutari nostro :
 If the wine be, as I think,
 Fit for reverend lips to drink,
 Jubilemus ei.
Ecce bonum vinum, venite potemus !

II.

Hodie, when cups are full,
 Not a thought or care should dull
 Corda vestra :—
 Eat your fill—the goblet quaff,
 Sufficient is the wine thereof
 Secundum diem :—
 What care I—if huge in size
 My paunch should wax?—it testifies
 Opera mea.
Venite potemus !

* Adapted from an old French *Imatatoyre Bachique*.

III.

Quadragesima years and more
I've seen, and jolly souls some score
 Proximus fui;
And, life throughout, have ever thought,
The sots, who tipple ale that's naught,
 Errant corde;
Yea, in my choler waxing hot,
I swear sour beer should enter not
 In requiem meam.
Ecce bonum vinum, venite potemus!

The re-appearance of Dame Fredegonde, and the Soldier, bearing a capacious stoup of claret, had given rise to this effusion of the Sorbonist; and as each goblet was now filled to the brim, after having been previously emptied, general hilarity prevailed among the thirsty scions of the University. The Bernardin insisted upon the Soldier taking a seat beside him, and the Sorbonist deemed it incumbent to present a flagon of the ruby fluid to Maitre Jacques, who drained it in a breath.

“Lans tringue!” cried the Scholar of Har-

court, slapping the soldier on the back, “ I drink to thee. Thou hast given us good measure and good wine, i’faith. May our buxom hostess never want such a cellarist—nor ourselves such a drawer--ha—ha !

Remplis ton verre vuide
Vuide ton verre plein.”

“ I will not refuse thy pledge, comrade,” replied the soldier, “ though my brain will not brook many such strong assaults so early in the morning. Here is to thy election to the dignity of chaplain at the next *Fête des Fous*.”

“ Jest not with me, compaing, but drink,” retorted Harcourt, angrily—“ it were thy safer course.—Ah !—thou refusest.—I discern something of the Huguenot about thee. I heard thee tell our hostess just now thou wert from the head-quarters of the Béarnais. One might guess as much from thy neglect of the flask, and devotion to the petticoats. *Dignum patellâ operculum.* Ah ! if it were ever to occur that thy master should be king of

France, a pretty time we should have of it ! The good old days of François I. would be revived with a vengeance. Not a husband in Paris could rest in his bed. The Saints defend us from such a consummation. Well, I bear him no ill will—here's to Henri of Navarre ! ”

“ Maranatha ! ” exclaimed the Sorbonist, “ that must not pass. We will be Catholic even in our cups. Thy pledge is heretical and schismatic. Rather let us drink confusion to the Béarnais, the Reform, and the church of Geneva—and success to the League, the true church, and the brave Balafré ! ”

“ To the Holy Union ! ” cried the Bernardin.

“ To the Pope ! ” shouted Montaigu.

“ To Beelzebub ! ” roared Harcourt. “ By Antichrist, I will hurl my wine-cup in his face who refuses my pledge—Henri of Navarre and the Huguenot cause ! ”

“ By the mass, I scent heresy in thy pledge, and refuse it,” returned the Sorbonist. The

words were scarcely out of his mouth when he received the contents of the scholar of Harcourt's flagon in his face.

In an instant all was confusion. Swords were drawn and crossed, and the table nearly upset in the confusion that ensued ; but by the united efforts of Blount, who had now formed one of the party, and the Swiss sergeant, the combatants were separated, and tranquillity, for the second time, restored. The cause of the disturbance, meantime, our nonchalant Soldier, so far from taking any share in the struggle, leaned back in his chair, and indulged in an immoderate fit of laughter.

“ How now, thou insensible varlet,” cried Harcourt, whose furious countenance and ruffled demeanour presented a singular contrast to his companion's apathy,—“ hast thou never a sword to draw in thy sovereign's behalf, or grace enough to thank him who is ready to fight thy battles for thee. By my soul I was wrong. Brother of the Sorbonne, thy hand. Thou wert in the right to object

to my rascal pledge. *Ventre-saint-Quintin!* from a Huguenot one gets neither aid nor acknowledgment."

"The quarrel was of thine own seeking, comrade," returned the soldier, with increased merriment, "I pressed thee not into my service—the good cause of the Reformed Faith needs no such blustering advocates as thou art—and the Béarnais will not laugh a whit the less loudly because one sot drinks to his success, and another to his confusion."

"Fairly spoken," cried Montaigu, "for a Huguenot our reformado hath the air of an honest fellow. *Favete linguis.* These brawls interfere with drinking. Let us have a song to restore us to harmony. *Chantons, beuvons, ung motet,* as glorious old Rabelais hath it."

"*Entonnons,*" cried the others, laughing.

"What shall it be?" asked the Soldier.

Le chanson de la Peronelle,
La vie de Monsieur Saint Fran^çoys,
Le Confiteor des Angloys,

or the merry burthen of some farce, sotie,
or joyous discourse ? ”

“ *La Réformeresse*, for instance,” retorted
Montaigu, vociferating at the top of his voice—

“ To Paris, that good city,
Navarre’s young King is come;
And flock forth the damsels pretty,
At the beating of his drum.
But the fairest ’mid the crowd, sirs,
The loveliest of the lot,
Is a nymph, who cries aloud, sirs,
To the church, sire, you go not,
Huguenot !

E’en give us what thou wilt, my puissant
Hector: so thy strains savour not of the
nasal melodies of Théodore Beza, or the can-
ticles of Clément Marot, they will be right
welcome.”

“ Lend me your voices in full chorus, then,”
replied the Soldier, “ and respond to my
litany.” And in a deep tone, he sang as
follows :—

From all men, who, counsel scorning,
To the tavern hie at morning
With latin base their talk adorning,
Libera nos Domine !

And from all, who night and day,
 Cash and raiment fling away,
 At cards and dice and other play,
Libera nos Domine!

“ *Satis superque*,” shouted Montaigu, “ thy rogation toucheth me too nearly, as testifieth the tattered state of my *exponibles*, to be altogether satisfactory—*Hei mihi!*”

Alea, vina, Venus, tribus his sum factus egenus.

Sed parum est. I have still a few liards left, and when my purse is utterly evacuate, I can turn Huguenot, or hang myself — it matters little which. In the meantime ;” and here the reckless youth once more broke into song :—

Song of the Scholar.*

I.

A jolly life enough I lead—that is *semper quum possum* ;
 When mine host inviteth me, I answer *ecce assum!*
 Women, wine, and waissailry *lubens libenter colo*,
 And after meals to pass the time *chartis ludisque volo*,
 Unluckily these games are not *omnino sine dolo*.

* An adaptation of a few verses of a macaronic poem of little merit entitled *Des fames, des dez, et de la taverne*,

II.

Wine to tipple I conceive *quod fui generatus*,
Treasure to amass, indeed, I doubt if I was *natus*,
Never yet with coin enough was I *locupletatus*,
Or, with a superfluity, *vehementer excitatus*—
Despice divitius si vis animo esse beatus.

III.

Whither are my raiments fled?—*amice mi!*—*si quæris?*
Quaffed they were in flowing cups *in tempore* (*heu!*)
veris;
Thus am I obliged to roam *subhorridus per vicos*,
Herding amidst truand rogues *et alios iniquos*:
Cum fueris felix multos numerabis amicos!

“Bellissime!” cried the soldier, “thy case is a hard one I must needs admit, comrade. But thou art a likely lad, and I promise thee, if thou wilt accompany me to the King of Navarre’s camp, whither I set out this morning, and wilt forswear thy roystering habits, and embrace the true doctrine, I will put thee in the way of lining thy pouch with weightier pieces than any it now holds, and of replacing thy thread-bare apparel with the iron livery of the Bourbon.”

appended to the last edition of the *Fabliaux et Contes des Poëtes François*.

“Weighty blows are said to abound more than weighty pieces in thy king’s psalm-singing camp,” returned Montaigu: “and I must be bribed by present payment if I vend my soul to Sathanas. *Papaiapæx!*” added he, filling his goblet, “let us drink between our songs, and sing between our draughts. *Ædipol!* my jolly missioner *ad partes infidelium*, thou hast the throat of a nightingale, and warblest a song divinely; and as thou art chary of the flask, wilt have the more leisure to divert us with another stave.”

“*Ventre-saint-Gris,*” muttered the soldier, smiling to himself, “could my faithful Rosni have foreseen, that during his absence, I should play the lover to a buxom aubergiste, the buffoon to a pack of losel scholars, and the rebel to myself, I had not escaped a lecture as long as ever John Calvin pronounced from his pulpit at Geneva. No matter: the monotony of life must be relieved; and he is a wise man who makes the most of the passing moment.”

With this philosophical reflection he yielded to the Scholar's importunities. We have before observed, that his countenance was remarkable for its frankness and cordiality: it had besides an indescribable expression of comic humour, which broadened and brightened as he proceeded with his vocal performance, into a glow of such irresistible drollery, that his auditors were almost convulsed with laughter; and, as real mirth is always contagious, the infection was speedily communicated to every guest of the Falcon,—the pensive and dolorous Ogilvy not excepted. Thus ran his ditty:—

*The Chronicle of Gargantua :
Showing how he took away the great Bells
of Notre-Dame.*

I.

GRANDGOUSIER was a toper boon, as Rabelais will tell ye,
Who, once upon a time, got drunk with his old wife
Gargamelly:

Right royally the bout began (no Queen was more
punctilious
Than Gargamelle) on chitterlings, botargos, gode-
billios !*

Sing, Caramari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

II.

They licked their lips, they cut their quips—a flask
then each selected ;
And with good Greek, as satin sleek, their gullets they
humected.
Rang stave and jest, the flask they pressed—but ere
away the wine went,
Occurred most unexpectedly Queen Gargamelle's con-
finement !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

III.

No sooner was Gargantua born, than from his infant
throttle,
Arose a most melodious cry to his nurse to bring the
bottle !
Whereat Grandgousier much rejoiced—as it seemed,
unto his thinking,
A certain sign of a humour fine for most immoderate
drinking !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

* Gaude billaux sont grasses trippes de coiraux. Coiraux
sont bœufz engressez à la criche, et prés guimaulx. Prés
guimaulx sont qui portent herbe deux foys l'an.

IV.

Gargantua shot up, like a tower some city looking
over !

His full-moon visage in the clouds, leagues off, ye might
discover !

His gracious person he arrayed—I do not mean to
laugh at ye—

With a suit of clothes, and great trunk hose, of a
thousand ells of taffaty !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

V.

Around his waist Gargantua braced a belt of silk
bespangled,

And from his hat, as a platter flat, a long blue feather
dangled ;

And down his hip, like the mast of ship, a rapier huge
descended,

With a dagger keen, stuck his sash between, all for
ornament intended !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

VI.

So learned did Gargantua grow, that he talked like one
whose turn is

For logic, with a sophister, hight Tubal Holofernes.
In Latin too he lessons took from a tutor old and
seedy,

Who taught the “ *Quid Est*,” and the “ *Pars*,”—one
Jobelin de Bridé !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

VII.

A monstrous mare Gargantua rode—a black Numidian courser—

A beast so droll, of filly or foal, was never seen before, sir !

Great elephants looked small as ants, by her side,— her hoofs were cloven,—

Her tail was like the spire at Langes,—her mane like goat-beards woven !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

VIII.

Upon this mare Gargantua rode until he came to Paris,

Which, from Utopia's capital, as we all know, rather far is—

The thundering bells of Notre-Dame, he took from out the steeple,

And he hung them round his great mare's neck in the sight of all the people !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

IX.

Now, what Gargantua did beside, I shall pass by without notice,

As well as the absurd harangue of that wiseacre Janotus ;

But the legend tells that the thundering bells Bragmardo brought away, sir,
And that in the towers of Notre-Dame they are swinging to this day, sir !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

X.

Now the great deeds of Gargantua,—how his father's foes he followed,—
How pilgrims six, with their staves and scrips, in a lettuce leaf he swallowed,—
How he got blind drunk with a worthy monk, Friar Johnny of the Funnels,—
And made huge cheer, till the wine and beer flew about his camp in runnels.

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

XI.

How he took to wife, to cheer his life, fat Badebec the moper ;
And by her begat a lusty brat, Pantagruel the toper !
And did other things, as the story sings, too long to find a place here,
Are they not writ, with matchless wit, by Alcofribas Nasier ?*

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

As the soldier brought his song to a close,
amid the thundering applause and inextin-

* The anagram of Francois Rabelais.

guishable laughter of the Scholars, his own exhilaration was considerably damped by the sudden appearance of two new-comers, who entered the cabaret, unobserved, during his performance; and with looks sufficiently expressive of their disapprobation of his conduct, held themselves aloof until the termination of his strains, when they slowly approached the table.

The foremost of these personages was a man of middle age, and severe aspect, fully equipped in the accoutrements of a military leader of the period; but his breast-plate, though of the brightest Milan steel, was wholly destitute of ornament, and resembled rather, in its heavy and cumbrous form, an antique cuirass, of the age of Bayard and Gaston de Foix (a period emulated by the chivalrous followers of Henri of Navarre), than the lackered and embossed armour worn by the knighthood of the court of France. A tall plume nodded upon his morion, and a long sword, called in the language of the tilt-yard a *gagne-pain*, was

girded to his thigh. The hand, able to wield such a blade with ease, could not, it was evident, be deficient in energy. From his right hip hung the long and trenchant dagger, termed, from its use in the combat, a *miséricorde*. His companion, a venerable man, with silver hair streaming upon his shoulders from beneath his black silk cap, was habited in the black Geneva cloak and band, constituting the attire of a Preacher of the Reformed Faith. His figure was bent by age and infirmities, and his steps needed the support of a staff; but the fire which blazed in his deep-seated gray eye, showed that the ardour and enthusiasm of his youthful spirit was still unextinguished.

“Diable!” mentally exclaimed the soldier, pushing aside his seat, and rising to greet the strangers,—“Rosni here—and my old preceptor, Florent Chrétien. Parbleu! their arrival at this juncture is unlucky. But I must put the best face I can upon the matter.” And, as these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, he reverently saluted the preacher,

and exchanging a significant look with his companion, the party adjourned to a more retired part of the cabaret.

“ I did not expect to find your Majesty thus occupied ; ” observed Rosni, in a tone of reproach, as soon as they were out of hearing of the company. “ Methinks the wise and valiant King of Navarre might have more profitably, as well as worthily, employed his leisure, than by administering to the amusements, and sharing in the pastimes of these unlicensed and idolatrous brawlers.”

“ Tush, Rosni,” replied the Soldier, who, it is needless to say, was Henri of Navarre, “ I am *not* a monarch with these revellers ; and were I to vouchsafe any explanation to thee, with whom I *am* a king, I could offer such reasons for my conduct as would convince thee, that what I have done has been without impeachment of my ‘ valour and wisdom,’ and was merely undertaken with a view to sustain my character as a soldier.”

“ Your character as a soldier would have been better sustained by repressing licence

than abetting it, Sire," returned Rosni bluntly. "Had I been in your Majesty's place, and these riotous Edomites had pressed me to make music for them, I would have treated them to a psalm, such as our pious Calvin hath himself appointed for the recreation of the faithful, or to one of those mournful ballads so displeasing to the enemies of our religion, wherein their own sanguinary atrocities are sternly set forth, and the sufferings of our martyrs painfully recorded."

"And have been laughed at for thy pains," said Henri. "Trust me, my expedient was the wiser one."

At this moment the voices of the scholars again rose loud in song; and the following chorus reached the ears of the King of Navarre and his companions:—

A merry company are we,
Who spend our lives in revelry,
Self-nick-named *Enfuns-sans-souci*!
Cric, croc, eric, croc, la, la!

"Ohé! soldier of the true faith," shouted

Montaigu—“another song before we start for the tourney! Heed not thy captain’s reprimand. We will bear thee harmless.”

“Thou hearest,” said Henri, smiling, “those *enfans-sans-souci*, as they not inaptly term themselves, are clamorous for my return. *Ventre-saint-Gris!* Rosni, I am half-disposed to send thee to them as my substitute. I would gladly see what effect one of thy doleful ditties would have upon their high-flown spirits. Wilt take my seat at yon table?”

“I will obey your Majesty’s behests,” replied Rosni, gravely—“But I wash my hands of the consequences.”

“Go then,” replied Henri, laughing—“thou deservest some punishment for thy imprudence. What, in the devil’s name, induced thee to bring old Chrétien to this ‘meeting of the mockers,’ and ‘seat of the scornful,’ as he would call it? Thy former experience might have led thee to expect some such untoward accident as the present; and it should be rather thy business to draw a veil

over thy sovereign's foibles than to betray them."

"I shall observe more caution in future," returned Rosni, in a tone of irony—"but after his own voluntary promise of amendment it ill became me to doubt my sovereign's maintenance of his word. Messire Florent Chrétien, whom I chanced upon at the Protestant consistory in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, this morning, hath a matter of importance to communicate to your Majesty's private ear, and to that end I ventured to bring him hither."

"Thou hast done well, Rosni," replied the King—"nevertheless I cannot pretermitt the punishment I have imposed upon thee.—Hark! my comrades call thee—go and join them."

Again the chorus of the Scholars arose above the general clamour; and a voice, (it was that of the Sorbonist) was heard vociferating the following stave:—

Song of the Sorbonist.

DEATH to the Huguenot ! fagot and flame !
Death to the Huguenot ! torture and shame !

Death ! Death !

Heretic lips sue for mercy in vain,
Drown their loud cries in the waters of Seine !

Drown ! Drown !

Hew down, consume them with fire and with sword !
A good work ye do in the sight of the Lord !

Kill !—Kill !

Hurl down their temples ! their ministers slay !
Let them bleed as they bled on Barthélemy's day !

Slay !—Slay !—

A roar of insolent laughter followed this effusion. Henri of Navarre bit his lips.

“ Go,” said he, frowning, “ leave me with Chrétien.”

“ By the holy Evangel ! I will make these accursed mass-mongers such sport as Sampson showed the Philistines,” returned Rosni.
“ But before I quit your presence, Sire,

I must acquaint you that your escort is in readiness at the Porte Montmartre, and that two of my followers with your steed await your coming forth at the door of this cabaret."

"Let them wait," answered the King, sharply, "I shall not set out upon my journey till the evening."

"How, Sire?" asked Rosni.

"It is my intention to attend the jousts held this morning at the Louvre."

"But your Majesty—"

"Is resolved to have my own way—so thou mayest spare me further remonstrances on that head, Rosni. Not only will I witness this tourney, but break a lance at it myself in honour of the Queen my spouse; though I will freely confess to thee she deserves no such attention at my hands, after her refusal to join me where she deems I now am, at my court at Pau. But let that pass. There is a Scottish Cavalier who hath boasted, as it seems to me, somewhat indiscreetly, of Marguerite's favours towards him,

whether truly or not, signifies little, as I hold secrecy to be the first duty of a gallant. I have a fancy for lowering this prattling mignon's crest, the rather that he is reputed an expert tilter, and as such not unworthy of my lance. And it may chance if Marguerite sees her favourite laid low, she may change her mind as to returning with us. At all events I shall attend this tourney in the quality of a knight-adventurer. Thou shalt ride forth with me anon, and procure me suitable equipments. My own steed will bear me bravely through the day."

"Your Majesty shall commit no such folly," replied Rosni, bluntly.

"Baron de Rosni," exclaimed Henri, haughtily, "I have honoured thee thus far with my friendship—but there are limits to my goodnature, which even *you* shall not exceed."

"Pardon my bluntness, Sire," returned Rosni—"but at the hazard of forfeiting your favour would I step between you and the peril to which you thus rashly expose your-

self. When your faithful counsellors reluctantly consented to your coming hither on this fruitless embassy to a Queen who loves you not, but who partakes of the perfidious and inconstant nature of her family—when, I say, they consented to your accompanying your own messengers, in disguise, my life was pledged for your safe return. That life is nothing. But upon your security, Sire, hangs the fate of a kingdom, and the prosperity of a faith of which you are the defender and champion. Bethink you of the cause in which you have embarked ; of your zealous followers ; of the whole Protestant world, whose eyes are fixed upon you. Bethink you, also, of the risk you run—of the inevitable consequences attendant upon a discovery of your presence ; of your long captivity in the walls of the Louvre from which you have so recently escaped.—Think of all this, and blame (if you can ?) the zeal which prompts me to speak thus boldly.”

“Leave me, monseigneur,” replied Henri.

“ I would speak with my old preceptor. You shall learn my resolves anon.”

Rosni bowed, and took the place assigned to him by the monarch at the table of the revellers. His arrival was greeted with loud laughter, and many muttered allusions from the reckless crew to his Huguenot principles.

“ Hark’ye, messires,” said Rosni, “ you have prevailed upon one of my troop to sing for you, and in return have favoured us with one of those ferocious melodies which your brethren howled to the thundering tocsin of the bloody day of Saint-Barthelemi. Ye shall now have my response. But first I charge ye let your goblets be filled to the brim, and drink the pledge I shall propose to you—‘ The Downfall of Antichrist, the Extermination of the League, and the universal establishment of the true Faith.’ Ha! you hesitate. By the Evangel! I will thrust my poignard into his throat who refuses my pledge.” Saying which he drew his dagger, and glanced fiercely round the group.

A stern silence succeeded this speech. The mirth of the Scholars was suddenly checked.—Each one glanced at his neighbour, as if he expected he would resent the insult. But no one dared openly to do so.

“I am with you, monseigneur,” exclaimed Blount. “I will see that all obey you.”

“The pledge!” said Rosni, seizing the Scholar of Harcourt by the throat, and forcing him to pronounce the hateful words, and afterwards to wash them down with a deep draught of wine.

“By Saint Thomas, thou escapest not,” cried Blount, grappling with the Sorbonist.

“Not one shall escape me,” said Rosni—“he shall drink it, or die the death.”

Accordingly, seeing resistance was in vain against armed force like that of the knight, the Scholars sullenly complied.

“I have not yet done with you, messires,” said Rosni, in a tone of mockery—“I will not insult the religion I profess, by allowing blasphemers, like yourselves, to take part in

its holy psalms. But as you have rung in mine ears the death knell of our slaughtered saints, ye shall listen to the judgment, called down from on high for that offence, upon the head of your late treacherous and bloodthirsty sovereign, Charles IX. Stir not, neither offer any interruption, as ye would avoid a sudden and speedy doom."

"Lend me your dagger, Sir Knight," said Ogilvy, unable to control his choler, and springing towards the table: "and I will compel as attentive audience to your strains as ever was accorded to the sermons of our pious Knox."

"And as willing," said the Bernardin, with a sneer.

"Take that in earnest of the chastisement I will inflict upon him who shall disobey this Knight's commands," said Ogilvy, bestowing a sounding buffet upon the Scholar's cheek, adding fiercely, as he received the *miséricorde* from Rosni, "the first of you, who speaketh word of offence, breathes his last."

Amid the glances of defiance and suppressed rage cast upon him by the Scholars, the Knight, in a deep stern tone, sang the following ballad :—

Charles IX. at Montfaucon.

I.

“ To HORSE—to horse!” thus spake King Charles,
“ to horse ! my lords, with me !
Unto Montfaucon will we ride—a sight you there shall
see.”—

“ Montfaucon, sire !” said his esquire—“ what sight
my liege ! how mean ye ?”
“ The carcase stark of the traitor dark, and heretic
Coligni.”

II.

The trumpets bray, their chargers neigh a loud and
glad revéillé—
And plaudits ring, as the haughty king from the Louvre
issues gaily :
On his right hand rides his mother, with her dames—
a gorgeous train—
On his left careers his brother, with the proud duke of
Lorraine.

CRICHTON.

III.

Behind is seen his youthful queen — the meek
Elizabeth*—
With her damsels bright, whose talk is light of the sad,
sad show of death :—
Ah ! lovely ones !—ah ! gentle ones ! from the scoffer's
judgment screen ye !
Mock not the dust of the martyr'd just, for of such
was good Coligni.

IV.

By foot up-hung, to flesh-hook strung, is now re-
vealed to all
Mouldering and shrunk, the headless trunk of the good
old Admiral :
Gash-visaged Guise the sight doth please—fierce lord,
was naught between ye !—
In felon blow of base Poltrot† no share had brave
Coligni.

* Elizabeth of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, an amiable and excellent Princess, whose genuine piety presented a striking contrast to the sanguinary fanaticism of her tyrannical and neglectful spouse. “*O mon dieu !*” cried she on the day of the massacre, of which she had been kept in ignorance ; “*quels conseillers sont ceux-là, qui ont donné le Roi tel avis ? Mon dieu ! je te supplie, et je requiers de lui pardonner, car si tu n'en as pitié j'ai grand peur que cette offense ne lui soit pas pardonnée.*”

† Jean Paltrot de Méré, the assassin of François de Guise, father of the Balafré, probably, in order to screen

V.

“ Now by God’s death !” the monarch saith, with inauspicious smile,
As, laughing, group the reckless troop round gray
Montfaucon’s pile ;
“ From off that hook its founder shook—Enguerrand
de Marigni—*
But gibbet chain did ne’er sustain such burthen as
Coligni.”

VI.

“ Back ! back ! my liege,” exclaimed a page, “ with
death the air is tainted,
The sun grows hot, and see you not, good sire, the
queen has fainted.”

himself, accused Coligni and Beza of being the instigators of his offence. His flesh was afterwards torn from his bones by red-hot pincers, but Henri of Lorraine never considered his sire’s death fully avenged until the massacre of the Admiral. Coligni’s head was sent by Catherine de Medicis to Rome as an offering to Gregory XIII. Upon this occasion the Pope had a medal struck off, stamped with an exterminating angel, and subscribed—*Ugonotorum Strages.*

* “ *Pereat suâ arte Perillus.* Enguerrand de Marigny, Grand Chamberlain of France, during the reign of Philippe-le-Bel constructed the famous gibbet of Montfaucon, and was himself among the first to glut its horrible *fourches patibulaires*, whence originated the ancient adage :—*Plus malheureux que le bois dont on fait le gibet.*

“ Let those retire,” quoth Charles in ire, “ who think they stand too nigh ;
To us no scent yields such content as a dead enemy.”*

VII.

As thus he spake, the king did quake—he heard a dismal moan—
A wounded wretch had crept to stretch his limbs beneath that stone :—
“ Of dying man,” groaned he, “ the ban, the Lord’s anointed dread,
My curse shall cling to thee, O King !—much righteous blood thou’st shed.”

VIII.

“ Now by Christ’s blood ! by holy Rood ! ” cried Charles, impatiently ;
“ With sword and pike—strike, liegemen, strike !—God’s-death ! this man shall die.”
Straight halbert clashed, and matchlock flashed—but ere a shot was fired—
With laugh of scorn that wight forlorn had suddenly expired.

* Ensuite Coligni fut traîné aux fourches patibulaires de Montfaucon. Le Roi vint jouir de ce spectacle, et s’en montra insatiable. On ne concevait pas qu’il put resister à une telle odeur ; on le pressait de se retirer. *Non dit-il, le cadavre d’un ennemi sent toujours bien !* **LACRATELLE.**

IX.

From the Louvre gate, with heart elate, King Charles
that morn did ride ;
With aspect dern did he return, quenched was his
glance of pride :—
Remorse and ruth, with serpent tooth, thenceforth
seized on his breast—
With bloody tide his couch was dyed—pale visions
broke his rest !*

As the Baron de Rosni concluded his song, a sullen murmur rose amongst the Scholars, deepening, as it proceeded, until it took the character of an angry groan.

“ By the memory of the good Thomas Crucé, who slaughtered eighty of these schismatics with his proper hand,” whispered the Sorbonist to the Scholar of Harcourt ; “ I will wash out the affront put upon us in the

* La maladie de Charles IX. était accompagnée de symptômes plus violens qu'on n'en remarque dans les maladies de langueur ; sa poitrine était particulièrement affectée ; mais son sang coulait par tous les pores ; d'affreux souvenirs persécutaient sa pensée dans un lit toujours baigné de sang ; il voulait et ne pouvait pas s'arracher de cette place. LACRATELLE. *Histoire de France pendant les Guerres de Religion.*

blood of that accursed Scot—*offensam ense vindicabo.*"

"My blade shall second you," returned Harcourt in the same tone.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HUGUENOT.

Chaque mot qu'il disait était un trait de flamme,
Qui pénétrait Henri jusqu'au fond de son ame.
Il quitte avec regret ce vieillard vertueux ;
Des pleurs en l'embrassant coulèrent de ses yeux.

VOLTAIRE. *Henriade : Chant I.*

No sooner had Rosni quitted his sovereign's presence than the venerable Florent Chrétien approaching Henri, took his hand and pressed it fervently to his lips. As the King withdrew his fingers from the old man's grasp, he perceived they were wet with his tears.

" Nay, by my faith, my excellent friend," said he, in a tone of great kindness, " this

must not be. Tears from such eyes as yours are reproaches too cutting for endurance. I had rather you would chide me in the harshest terms you could employ, than assail me with the only weapons against which I am not proof. What would you have me do?"

" Does not your own great and generous heart, my liege," returned the Preacher, " which prompts you to interpret the overflowing of an anxious breast into rebuke, tell you what course you ought to pursue? Does it not point out to you that your life, precious in itself—but oh! of inestimable value to all members of our pure religion, to whom you are as Joshua, or Maccabæus, may not be lightly emperiled by your own act, without manifest departure from that high course, which the King of Kings hath appointed you to run; and which in due season, if you remain true unto yourself, and to your cause, you will doubtless gloriously accomplish. Well and truly hath your faithful follower, the Baron de Rosni, spoken,

when he averred that on your safety dependeth that of the true Church of Christ ; and not in vain will my tears have been shed, if they avail to turn you from these vanities, and recal your nobler nature. Better I should lament, than your enemies rejoice. Better one should blush in secret, than a whole kingdom be turned to shame for its sovereign's defection. Cast off this slavery of the senses. Yield not to the devices and snares of the Prince of Darkness. You are our guardian, our bulwark, our tower of strength. Pause ere you wantonly expose our decimated flocks to the further ravages of these devouring wolves." As he spake the old man's eyes glistened, and his looks kindled till his glowing countenance wore an air of apostolic fervour, that produced, more than his words, a strong impression upon the King.

" Rest assured, my good friend," replied Henri, " I will in no way compromise my own security, or that of the church over whose welfare I watch, and in whose behalf I have raised my banner. I have other and

stronger motives than the mere love of such a pageant which attract me to these jousts. But I here gage my royal word to you, that I will place neither my life nor my personal safety in needless jeopardy. And now," added he, with a smile, " cordially thanking you for your admonitory counsels, which, as you well know, are seldom pleasant in the ears of kings; and, having scarce leisure for a longer homily, or even for further conference at this moment, let us turn to your own peculiar concerns. If you have any communication to make, delay it not. I am impatient to know how I can serve you."

" It is not in my own behalf that I would claim your Majesty's services," rejoined the preacher; " but in that of one in whom you yourself are nearly interested. Know, Sire, that a sister of the Prince of Condé is at this moment a captive in the hands of the bloody Jezabel of France, Catherine de Medicis. It is for her deliverance from thraldom and oppression that I solicit your aid; and if you *are* resolved to expose yourself to need-

less risk, let it be to effect the liberation of a Princess of your own royal blood, a zealous believer in our creed, and in the eyes of a searcher of knightly adventure, for as such I must regard your Majesty, a distressed and forlorn damsel."

" If this, indeed, were as you represent it, my good friend," replied Henri, " you should have my instant aid, even though it were needful to bear her from the Louvre with my handful of men. But you have been deceived by some false statement.—Our cousin of Condé has no sister at the court of France."

" The Prince believes she perished in her infancy, Sire," returned the preacher; " but her preservation from the sword of those fierce Amalekites, who beset the good Louis de Bourbon on his flight to Rochelle, was little less than miraculous, as you will find when I relate to you the history of this unfortunate Princess, as it was delivered to me by one of the attendants of the Queen-

Mother, who hath recently become a convert to our faith."

"Your information is derived from a suspicious quarter," returned the King, with a smile of incredulity. "Catherine's *camariere* are as deceitful to the full as the daughters of the Philistines. I know them of old. Your proselyte may prove a Delilah, after all, and her specious story only a snare laid to entrap you. Our uncle, Louis de Bourbon, it is true, hath often spoken of the hapless fate of his infant daughter in the mountain defiles near Sancerre, but he believed, nay was assured, that she perished."

"Credit me, Sire, she lives," replied Chrétien. And he then succinctly detailed such particulars of Esclairmonde's story as are already familiar to the reader—adding that the Princess had been hitherto kept in ignorance of her illustrious origin from a fear lest some inadvertence, not unnatural on the part of one so young and inexperienced, should betray her consciousness of her real rank and

condition to the suspicions of Catherine, and militate against any plans formed for her deliverance. The preacher likewise stated, that he had been summoned at an early hour on that morning to the Louvre by Annunziata, (the attendant from whom he had obtained his knowledge of this important secret) to visit Esclairmonde—that she had revealed to him, without reserve, the events of the preceding night—imploring him to free her from the persecution of her royal lover, who, it appeared, had despatched a *billet*, stating that if she offered further opposition to his passion, he would denounce her as a heretic to the inquisition of the Catholic priesthood. “She was bathed in tears when I entered the chamber,” said Chrétien, “and at first refused to be comforted, but deeming the proper period arrived for its disclosure, I communicated to her from what illustrious stock she sprang, and besought her to comport herself like a descendant of that royal house.”

“ Ha ! corbleu ! how received she this intelligence ? ”

“Like a daughter of the race of Bourbon,” replied Chrétien—“Her grief was at once checked, and she spake calmly and deliberately with me upon the means of her evasion. One circumstance alone appeared to give her uneasiness — but I doubt whether I am at liberty to mention it to your Majesty—”

“I care not to know it my good friend, returned the King, “if it is aught the Princess would not wish to be divulged to me.”

“It is, however, desirable, I think, that your Majesty should be acquainted with the state of her heart, the rather that you may form a judgment—”

“Whether the alliance be suitable, ha ! Messire.—What Cavalier has been so fortunate as to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of this captive Princess ? ”

“A Scottish Gentleman, my Liege, who hath greatly distinguished himself at the court of your royal brother of France—the Chevalier Crichton.”

“Mort de ma vie ! ” exclaimed Henri, angrily —“Doth *he* aspire to her hand ? ”

“ Your Majesty forgets that he knew her only as one of Queen Catherine’s maids of honour.”

“ True,” replied the King, sternly—“ but she is now our cousin, and as such no mate for an adventurer like Crichton.”

“ It was her sense of this change in her condition, my liege, and of the impassable bar placed between her and her lover that gave her so much pain:—nor was her uneasiness diminished, when she learnt, as she shortly afterwards did from a missive conveyed to her from the Chevalier Crichton, that he had by accident made the discovery of her exalted origin, and at the peril of his life, wrested the proofs of it from Catherine’s own hands, but in his endeavour to transmit the packet to her while he was yet in the power of the Queen-Mother, it had been irrecoverably lost.”

“ Ventre-saint-Gris ! ” exclaimed Henri—“ were there such proofs ? ”

“ The Chevalier Crichton affirmed that the packet contained letters from the Queen-

Mother, the Maréchal de Tavannes, and the Cardinal of Lorraine."

"Diable!" cried the King with vivacity,—"those letters were well worth the risk of a life, and would have obviated the necessity of bringing forward the scarce-credible statement of your proselyte Annunziata. Heaven grant they have not fallen again into Catherine's clutches! It was a bold deed to tear her prey from the lioness, and this Crichton hath approved himself a Cavalier of no mean prowess. One question more, good Chrétien, did not this Scottish knight promise to finish his adventure by delivering our captive cousin?"

"Of a verity, my liege, he did so," returned the Preacher, with some reluctance.

"I knew as much," said Henri, smiling—"Esclairmonde is now at the Louvre?—ha!"

"In the train of Queen Louise, whom she accompanies at noon to the lists, where by his Majesty's commands, she presides as

sovereign-arbitress. To-night there is a new fête and masque at the Louvre. Before that time she must be delivered from thraldom, or her fate is sealed."

"Before that hour she *shall* be delivered," replied the King, "or I will myself proclaim her rank before Henri and his assembled court. But time presses, good Chrétien, and I must to the tilt-yard."

"Your Majesty—"

"Is peremptory — headstrong — what you will? Waste no more words upon me. Tarry here till the jousts are over, and I will rejoin you."

As he spoke, the King made a sign to the Baron de Rosni, who, with a glance of ineffable disdain at the menacing gestures of the Scholars, instantly rejoined him; and after a little further conversation with the preacher, and a valediction, which greatly scandalized the good old man, proffered to his buxom hostess, Henri and his follower quitted the cabaret.

They were about to mount the steeds await-

ing their coming forth, at the door of the tavern, when a band of equerries, pages and gentleman-ushers in superb liveries of crimson velvet, slashed with yellow satin, accompanied by a crowd of trumpeters and hautboy-players blowing loud flourishes, rode furiously down the Rue Pelican, shouting as they passed—“way for the Queen-Mother—stand back—stand back.” Henri drew his cap closely over his brow at this intimation, and appeared to busy himself about the saddle of his charger. Presently appeared Catherine, mounted upon a beautiful Spanish jennet, and attended by her *petite bande des dames*, all on horse-back, on their way to the Louvre. It was impossible to conceive a gayer or more attractive sight than this brilliant troop of youthful dames, each attended by a page, habited in her colours, presented. All were masked in demi-vizards of various dyes, and the beholder therefore could do little more than guess at the loveliness of their lineaments. But the brightness of the orbs flashing through the apertures of those witching *tourets*

de nez—the splendour of their attire, — the grace they displayed on their steeds, — the waving of their silken tresses,—the elegance and lightness of their figures left him in little incertitude as to the charms of feature thus enviously concealed from view. In spite of the risk incurred by such a proceeding, Henri could not resist the temptation of stealing a glance at the fair equestrians as they passed in review before him; and as the person of one, who seemed to be more exquisitely proportioned than her companions, attracted his ardent gaze, the dams^{el} (it was La Rebours) remarked to her companion—“ Sante-Marie ! La Fosseuse, only see how much that soldier resembles the King of Navarre !”

“ Nenni !” returned La Fosseuse pertly, “ I discover no likeness—or if there is any, the soldier has decidedly the advantage over the monarch.”

“ Perhaps so,” sighed La Rebours ; “ but the resemblance is very remarkable.” And as she turned her head to satisfy herself of the

fact, the King had disappeared. “ How very singular ! ” thought she, musing on the circumstance as she rode along.

We will now return to the cabaret, and enquire after the Gelosa. With difficulty the unhappy maiden mastered her terror when she perceived Ogilvy engaged in a second brawl with the Scholars, and found herself deserted by both her protectors ; but her alarm was greatly increased, when after the departure of the Baron de Rosni, the menaces of the Scholars assumed a more determinately hostile shape ; and the Scot was loudly threatened with death on all sides. Neither could the strong arms of Blount and the Swiss sergeant, nor the peaceful interposition of the preacher avail to allay the storm. They cried out loudly for his blood, and swords and daggers were drawn,—tables and benches overturned,—glasses broken—deep and vindictive oaths uttered ; and a sanguinary conflict must have ensued had not the Chevalier du Guet and his two lieutenants armed with partizans, and accompanied by

several other personages in sable dresses, whose sallow countenances, as well as certain peculiarities in their costume, proclaimed them to be Italians, suddenly entered the tavern. The chief of the watch commanded peace in the King's name ; and apprehensive of the consequences of a refusal to obey his order, the combatants were compelled to sheath their blades. In the meantime, another event occurred, which gave a new turn to the affair, and served to re-awaken their suspended animosity. As her eye rested upon the new comers, Ginevra could not repress a faint scream, and attracted by the sound, one of the foremost of their number instantly rushed towards her ; and ere the hapless maiden could offer any resistance, she found herself in the power of the followers of Gonzaga. To rush to her resistance, to extricate her from the grasp of her assailant, was with Ogilvy the work of a moment. His assistance was ineffectual. Ginevra only escaped from one hand to be retaken by the other. The Sorbonist twined his arms round

the form of the flying girl and bore her back to her captors. Ogilvy, meanwhile, had not relinquished the grasp he had fixed upon the Italian. In the struggle that succeeded, a packet fell from the doublet of the latter. The Scot recognised it at once.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed he, setting his foot upon the papers,—“ to the rescue ! Blount,—to the rescue ! —there is the object of our patron Crichton’s search,—the documents establishing the Princess Esclairmonde’s birth, to the rescue ! to the rescue ! ”

“ Gracious heaven ! ” exclaimed the preacher, “ to his aid young man. I would fain wield a sword in such a cause myself—help ! —help ! ”

Blount needed not this incitement to draw his sword. He threw himself resolutely upon the Italians, whose weapons were all directed against Ogilvy’s breast, and struck the foremost of them to the ground. But his purpose was checked by a sudden and fatal issue being put to the combat. One of the followers of Gonzaga, watching his opportunity, plunged

his stiletto deeply into Ogilvy's breast. Without a groan, though he felt himself mortally wounded, the Scot now stooped down, and receiving as he did, numberless wounds from his adversaries, obtained possession of the packet.

“Take it,” said he, as with a dying effort, he reached the Englishman's side, “you know its destination—heed me not—away—my strength will not avail me to fly—but my heart goes with you and to my patron—tell him—I cannot speak—go—go.”

Uttering these words, he committed the packet to Blount's custody, and suddenly turning, confronted his adversaries with a look so fierce and desperate, that the boldest of them shrank back appalled.

“Follow me, messire,” whispered Dame Fredegonde, who, under cover of the protecting arm of the Swiss sergeant, had ventured to approach the combatants, “follow me,” said she, plucking Blount's sleeve, “and you, too, worthy sir,” addressing the preacher, “you can render little assistance to that dying

man, and your presence will only incite these murtherous students to further acts of violence. Holy Virgin!—blessed Luther I mean—but I scarcely know what I am saying—that such a fray as this should have dishonoured my dwelling. Maître Jacques, look to their swords—mercy upon us!—ward them off—I will find means to requite your valour—come along, messires—quick—quick, this way—this way.”

Blount looked irresolute.

“ By Saint Ben’et,” said he, “ I never yet turned my back upon an enemy; and I see not why I should fly for the first time when I have a friend to avenge.”

“ If thou wouldest indeed avenge me, tarry not,” cried Ogilvy.

And as he spoke, the sword of one of his antagonists was thrust through his body, and the Scot fell to the earth.

“ Let them not wholly triumph,” gasped the dying man,—“ ah! he escapes,” cried he, turning his glazed eyes in the direction of Blount, who, defended by the nervous arm

and huge falchion of the Swiss, as well as by the dreaded fangs of his dog Druid, and guided by the friendly hostess, speedily effected his retreat, together with the preacher, through a small door-way, not hitherto observed by the guests. As this door was closed and barricaded by the stalwart person of Maître Jacques, a smile of exultation lighted up Ogilvy's features: "I die content," murmured he.

At this moment a piercing shriek rent the air. It proceeded from the Gelosa. Her captors were about to bear her off, but finding she continued her outcries, one of them twisted a scarf round her throat in such a manner, that it was impossible for the wretched maiden to utter further sound. This done, regarding neither the entreaties of Dame Fredegonde, nor the impotent threats of Ogilvy, they disappeared with their prey. At the same time the Chevalier du Guet and his attendants quitted the tavern.

"Recreants," cried the Scot, who had raised himself upon one arm—"will none

lend a hand to the rescue?—will none help her?—That youth, as you deem him, is a maiden in disguise,—will ye stand by and see wrong done to a woman?—to the rescue if ye be men!”

“ Think you we will defend thy leman, fool,” said the Sorbonist, with a derisive laugh, as he passed him; “ our vengeance is now fully complete—thou art robbed of thy life and thy mistress—ha—ha.—Come, comrades let us to the lists. This augurs well. This Scot’s countryman may chance to meet a like downfall. We shall see. And hark ye, compaings, if we can lay hands upon that heretic preacher, we will see if there is a billet to be found in the Prés-aux-clercs:—

Death to the Huguenot!—fagot and flame!
Death to the Huguenot!—torture and shame!
Death! Death!”

And all joining in this menacing chorus, the Scholars quitted the cabaret.

Scarcely had the reckless troop gained the

street, when a band of men, wearing the livery of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, entered the chamber.

“Where is the youth whom we are to conduct from Paris?” asked their leader, glancing around in astonishment and alarm.

“In the hands of ——” gasped Ogilvy. Ere he could complete the sentence, the brave Scot became for ever silent.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PROCESSION.

Genets, coursiers, riches bardes, houssures,
Plumars remplis d'orphaveries fines,
Chanfrains dores à grans entrelassures,
Arniets luysans, bicquoquets, capelines,
Bucques de pris, tres riches mantelines—

ANDRÉ DE LA VIGNE. *Le Vergier d'Honneur.*

As the hour for the opening of the lists drew nigh, all the approaches of the Louvre were thronged with eager and curious crowds hurrying from each quarter to behold the chivalrous pageant. This concourse consisted of every class of society to be found in the vast and miscellaneous population of Paris, from the sedate citizen and his demure spouse, to be distinguished by the pro-

priety of their gear, (costume being then subject to a royal ordinance), down to the rough and half-clothed boatmen, who plied upon the Seine, and the sturdy artizan who haunted its banks. Nor must we omit a host of Jews, beggars, truands, and other nondescript vagabonds, who usually formed the mass of a Parisian crowd at the period of our narrative. Amongst these the magistrates of the City, the provosts of the merchants, the echevins and their followers in bipartite robes of crimson, and tawny-coloured stuffs embroidered with a silver ship (the civic cognizance), the sergeants, archers, cross-bowmen, and arquebussiers of the town-guard cut a conspicuous figure. As usually happens, however, where a crowd is collected, the softer sex predominated. For one steel or felt cap there were ten coifs of silk or linen. Nor were the members of the various religious fraternities wanting : the gray or russet frock—the cowl or shaven head—and the long staff—might be detected amid the dense assemblage. Cordeliers, Carmelites, and Minims

were mingled with the higher dignitaries of the church. The students of the University, ever on the alert when a spectacle was about to take place, herded thither in vast bands. Here came a courtly Abbé—it was our acquaintance, Pierre de Bourdeille—upon a mule with its superb housings, followed by a train of richly-clad lacqueys. The mob doffed their caps as Brantôme ambled on. Next appeared what in our own time would be regarded with much merriment, but which was then a matter of too frequent occurrence to excite either surprise or ridicule, a couple of gaily-attired youths mounted upon the same steed;—then a cavalier and dame likewise on horse-back, the latter seated *en coupe* on a velvet pillion, her features concealed, as was the universal mode with the ladies when out of doors, by a demi-mask. The housings of the charger were unusually superb; his broad martingal and wide-reined bridle being of crimson leather richly ornamented with gold. Next followed a company of singly-mounted cavaliers with a host of valets and attendants

arrayed in the extremity of the court fashion, with dancing feathers and fluttering mantles ; the curvetting of their coursers, and the blows of their whips, as they dashed recklessly onwards, occasioned considerable confusion amongst the foot-passengers ; and the smiles and compliments they lavished upon the fair *citoyennes* and their daughters hardly compensated with the bluff burgesses for their own sprained shoulders and broken heads. Nevertheless, in spite of the jostling and hustling, the striving, straining and squeezing, the utmost good humour prevailed ; but this, indeed, might be attributed to the presence of so many armed authorities.

Loud shouts were now raised, and the multitude was pushed backwards and driven into more compact masses as the magnificent litter of the Queen of Navarre was borne along to the Louvre. In vain did the spectators endeavour to catch a glimpse of the features or person of the lovely Marguerite. A mask defied their scrutiny, and she leaned back in her carriage as if anxious

to elude observation. Not so her attendant Torigni. The swanlike throat of the sprightly Florentine might be observed above the sides of the carriage, and her snowy hand, divested of its glove, and covered with rings negligently arranged a raven ringlet. Marguerite's litter swept by, and was followed by the huissiers and guard of the governor of Paris. René de Villequier boasted the most magnificent caroche in Paris ; and the vehicle which, upon this occasion, conveyed the portly person of the Marquis was little inferior in decoration and gilding, though somewhat different in construction, from our own Lord Mayor's state equipage. Then came the trampling of hoofs, and the loud fanfares of trumpets, and the superbly-accoutred band of Gascon gentlemen — forty-five in number, whence their designation—commanded by the Baron D'Épernon, wheeled into sight ; the sun-beams brightly glancing upon their corslets, and upon the tips of their lances. The last fourteen of this gallant company were sheathed in complete steel, with yellow scarves crossing

their burnished cuirasses. Two pages succeeded in the violet-coloured livery of the Baron, with his blazon displayed upon their sleeves and doublets. Then came his esquires sustaining his shield, charged likewise with his cognizance; and lastly appeared D'Épernon himself in a costly suit of russet armour, enriched with chiselled arabesques and deep reliefs of gold.

The admiration, excited by the Baron's retinue had not entirely subsided, when the spectators were attracted towards a further display of knightly splendour. A flourish of trumpets blown by six mounted men-at-arms, whose clarions were ornamented with silken bandrols fringed with gold, displaying the princely scutcheon of the family of Gonzaga, announced the approach of the Duc de Nevers. The Duke rode a noble Arabian courser, and proceeded at a slow and stately pace. His valets and pages were more numerous than those of the Baron D'Épernon, and he was attended by four gentlemen ushers who walked by his side bareheaded, with wands in their

hands. Fully armed in a suit of Milan steel, of the finest workmanship, his breast-plate, brighter than silver, reflected the rays of the sun as from a dazzling mirror. His bourginot, as well as his corslet, was crusted with gold and pearls, and from his neck, suspended to a chain of the same metal, hung the order of the Saint-Esprit. A plume of white ostrich feathers nodded on his crest. His demeanour was so dignified, and his train so sumptuous, that his appearance was greeted by the assemblage with deafening acclamations—acknowledged by the proud Duke with a haughty inclination of his head. Nor was the popularity of the wily Italian diminished, as his attendants showered amongst the mob broad silver pieces, for which they fought and scrambled. By his side, in his full ecclesiastical costume of scarlet silk simar with lawn sleeves and snowy rochet, and upon a sleek, well-fed mule, led by two attendants, each of whom had a hand upon its bridle, rode Pierre de Gondi, Bishop of Paris; a prelate in high favour with the Queen-

Mother, to whom, indeed, he owed his elevation. There was something sinister in the dark and shifting glance of this churchman of Florentine origin, which seemed to confirm the horrible reports that prevailed as to the motives of Catherine's predilection for him. But be this as it may, the hypocritical smile which now lit up his sallow features was construed by the observers into an expression of infinite benevolence, the rather that his almoner who followed closely at his heels, distributed his dole with no sparing hand.

Immediately behind the suite of the Duc de Nevers, came an esquire of Vincenzo de Gonzaga, bearing a small triangular shield, painted white, on which appeared the device of a sable mask, inscribed with the motto *Vendetta*. This esquire wore the livery of the Prince (the combined hues of red and yellow) displayed in the flowing satin housings of his steed, traversed with broad cross-bars of orange and crimson, in his slashed velvet doublet, haut-de-chausses of different dyes, and parti-coloured plumes. Next advanced

a band of youthful pages magnificently attired, and mounted on coursers caparisoned in cloth of gold, barred like the housings of the esquire, the stripes being described upon their gorgeous trappings by alternate lines of frieze-wrought, and smooth-beaten tissue. Upon the silken just-au-corps of each page was embroidered in golden thread the ducal badge of Mantua and Montferrat. So gorgeous were their appointments in detail, that their bonnets, shoes, saddles, bridles, and even the scabbards of their rapiers blushed with crimson velvet. Then followed a host of lacqueys on foot, similarly, though less splendidly arrayed : then another esquire sustaining the tri-coloured lance of the Prince, decorated with silken pennoncel : then two foot pages attired in habiliments of cloth of gold and silk, leading his steed—a mighty Allemayne charger with eyes of flame, expanded nostril, and pawing hoof—furnished for Gonzaga's use by the provident Duc de Nevers. Thick crimson velvet housing, enwoven with the ducal cognizance

covered this noble animal, and descended almost to his pastern joints ; the saddle was of velvet of the same hue as the rest of the harness—the chamfrin, or head-piece, was of gilded mail, with a short projecting steel pike, and tufts of scarlet, and saffron-stained plumes adorned his front and croup.

Lastly, armed cap-à-pee, in a suit of black mail embossed with gold and precious stones, rode the prince Vincenzo. A *garde-bras*, or *haute-pièce* as it was subsequently termed, covered the front of his cuirass, and defended his throat and left arm, so far as the gauntlet, but being of a single piece, and introduced in those later days of chivalry, for the better conservation of the jousters, the posture assumed by the knight, who adopted this safe-guard in the combat, became fixed and unalterable as that of a statue ; his right arm alone being left at liberty. A tall egret of sable feathers shadowed his helm ; and with his visor closed, and maintaining, of necessity, a stern and moveless attitude, Gonzaga passed slowly onwards. His cortège was

completed by another band of gaudy valets, and the minstrels, who enlivened the procession with the tambour, the cornet, and the clarion.

A fresh clangour of trumpets admonished the spectators, that other comers were at hand ; and the announcement was speedily followed by the brilliant retinue of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, which, if it could not vie with that of Gonzaga in magnificence, surpassed it in number and consequence, consisting of a throng of lordlings and youthful gentlemen of the best families of France, who were eager upon this occasion to array themselves under the banners of their monarch's chief favourite, and to distinguish themselves with the snowy scarf which he had adopted as his ensign. It was true the same prodigality of cloth of gold and velvet was not here exhibited, as in the preceding cavalcade :—

Mais de harnois, ne d'armure de joute
Ne leur failloit une petite pièce.

There was no lack of “tilting furniture”

emblazoned shields." A gayer troop was never seen. Nor could a greater contrast have been found to that which preceded it. The vivacity of their hilarious leader seemed to have diffused itself throughout his company. Success appeared to be written in their beaming features. Nothing was heard but shouts of laughter, and the jingling of arms; nothing seen but the waving of plumes and banners, the glimmer of helm and spear, and caracoling of coursers.

Completely armed in a suit of polished steel, Joyeuse rode a charger barbed with *ung bel et grand couvrechief* of silver tissue, edged with azure fringe; and wore a scarf of white silk, richly embroidered, thrown across his left shoulder. From his morion floated a lambrequin of slashed satin, and his surcoat was decorated with his armorial bearings. His handsome countenance was riant with gaiety; and he conversed in an animated manner with a knight, who careered by his side, and upon whom, even more than the Vicomte, the attention of the gazers was

fixed. Nor was the appearance of this cavalier undeserving the admiration he excited. He seemed the very mirror of chivalry. The experienced horseman applauded the consummate grace with which he sat his courser (a powerful and beautifully-formed bay, whose skin shone almost as brightly as his rider's coat of mail), and the ease with which he ever and anon compelled him to perform the balotades, croupades, and other graces of the high manège, alluded to in the following alliterative quatrain :—

*Vite virade,
Pompante pannade,
Saut soulevant,
Prompte petarrade.*

while the female portion of the assemblage marvelled at the exceeding beauty of feature disclosed by the open visor of his casque, and the manly symmetry of the limbs, defined by his light and curiously-fashioned breastplate, “brassards, cuissards, jamb, and solleret.” The housings of his steed were of white

damask, diapered with gold, and bordered with minever. His chamfrin was decorated like that of Gonzaga, with a superb *houpe de plumes*, and similarly accoutred. From the crest of the knight depended a lambrequin of slashed silk ; and his surcoat was woven with his blazon, a lion rampant azure, armed, and langued gules.

Following this preux chevalier, rode two esquires, in liveries of azure and white ; the one carrying his painted lance, on the coronel of which was fastened a knot of ribbands ; the gage, doubtless, of the dame in whose honour he was about to run a course : the other bearing a silver shield with the device of a dragon vert, spouting out fire—and the motto *Loyal au mort*, inscribed in blue characters upon a scroll.

When it became known to the assemblage that this knight, in whom all felt so much interest, was no other than the Admirable Crichton, the adversary of the Prince of Mantua, their acclamations were so loud and deafening ; and the efforts of those in the rear

so strenuous to obtain a nearer view of his person and features, that it required the application of both partisan and sword on the part of the attendants to keep back the rabble; while the object of their curiosity, apprehensive of some such tumult taking place, as occurred on the preceding day at the University, was fain to set spurs to his charger, and to urge his companions into a quicker movement, in order to escape from observation.

“ By my halidom !” exclaimed Joyeuse, as they reached the grand portal of the Louvre, and found the space before it invested with a gay confusion of litters, caroches, steeds, lackeys, and pages in their various and resplendent liveries—“ to judge from this rout we shall have goodly attendance at our jousting. You must do your devoir gallantly, *mon cher*, for you will have the eyes of all the chivalry and beauty of France upon you. There is not a magnate of our court, whose colours I do not discern amidst yon rout of servitors. We are late. Those knaves in the slashed doub-

lets, form part of the train of our challenger's padrino. Gonzaga is already in the tilt-yard."

" Better be the last to enter the field than the first to quit it," replied Crichton, smiling. " But whom have we here ? By Saint Andrew ! my gossip, Chicot. So ho ! Bayard," cried he, patting the neck of his charger, who, obedient to his voice instantly stood still ; but evinced his impatience by arching his neck, champing at the bit, snorting and pawing the ground. " What wouldest thou ?" demanded the Scot, as the Jester approached him with an odd serio-comic look.

" I am the bearer of a cartel to thee," replied the Jester, in a tone of mock defiance.

" Gramercy, gossip, a challenge !" ejaculated Crichton ; " from thy brother, Siblot, to shiver a marotte against his cock's-comb ? Know'st thou not, that by the laws of honour, I am restrained from entering into a second quarrel, until my first be arranged ?"

" I know it," answered Chicot, in an under

tone. “But thou must offer some response, yea or nay, to my appeal. Here is the missive,” added he, delivering a perfumed note sealed and secured with a silken thread to the Scot; “peruse it and deliver me thine answer.”

“The cipher of Marguerite de Valois,” exclaimed Crichton, as he regarded the billet; “nay then, it is indeed a combat à outrance.”

“I would advise you to decline the encounter, or rather peaceably to arrange it,” returned the Jester; “but, in the meantime, will it please you to read the cartel, and to furnish me with some token of your intentions to convey to my royal mistress?”

Crichton hastily broke open the seal, and, as his eye glanced over the contents of the note, a slight flush of anger rose upon his cheek.

“I will rather perish than accept the terms she proposes,” murmured he, tearing it in pieces, and scattering the fragments to the breezes.

“Hold, gossip,” cried Chicot, “reserve

that thread of gold, I am to take that to her Majesty as a sign of your acquiescence."

"Never," answered Crichton sternly; "tell her I have burst her chains. She would have some token—tis well," added he, withdrawing his gauntlet from his hand, and giving the bezoar-ring to the Jester, "let this gem be a proof to her, that I neither fear her threats, nor will accept of her tenderness."

"At least beware of,—" but ere the Jester's warning could be concluded, Crichton had given the rein to his steed and dashed swiftly through the gateway.

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